RISHIS IN INDIAN ART AND LITERATURE

C. SIVARAMAMURTI

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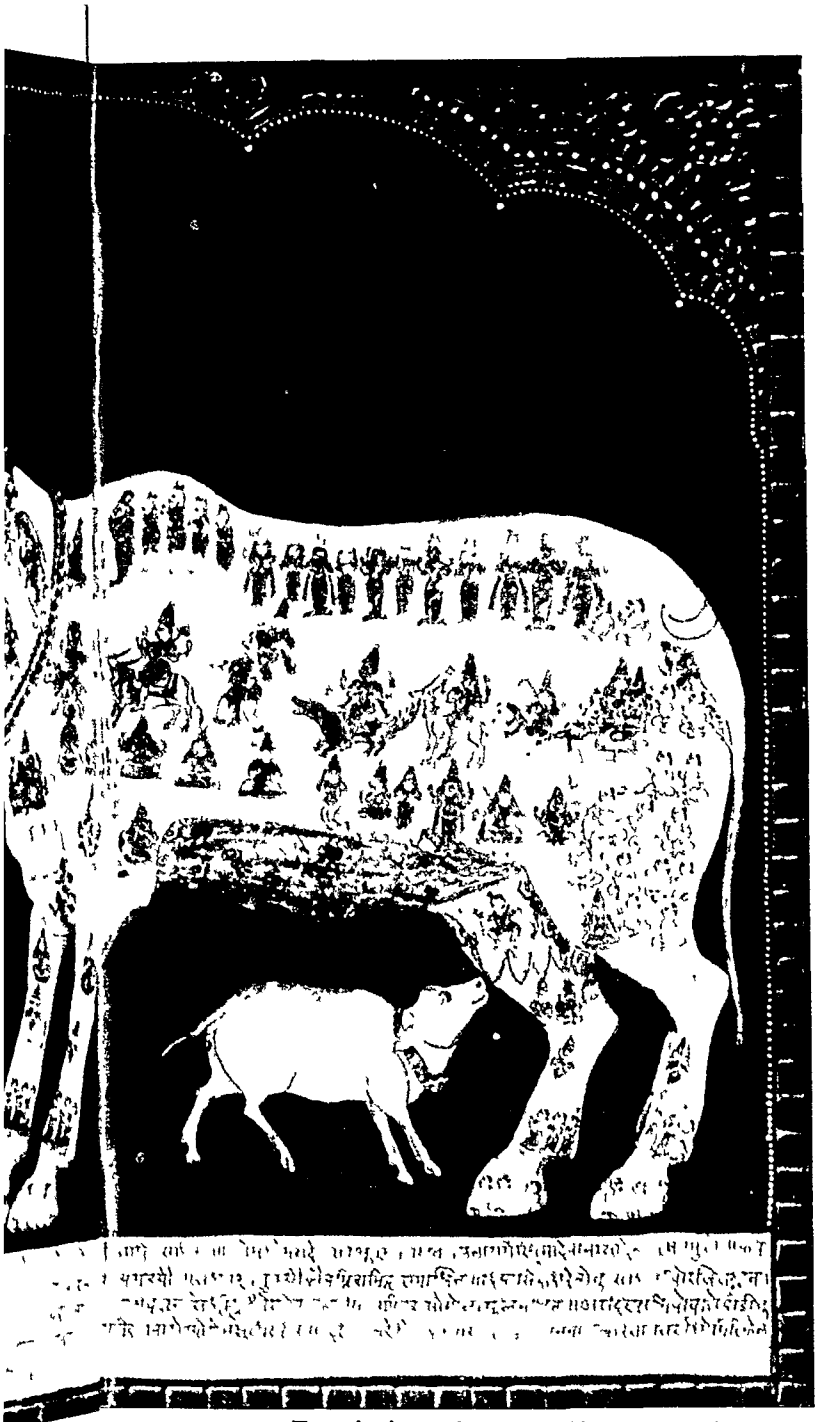

Frontispiece: Fig. 105 Chyavana and cow, Maraṭha school, 18th century A.D., Tañjāvur, National Museum.

To
the memory of
Dr. T.N. Ramachandran
with affection and esteem

FOREWORD

It is a pleasure and privilege to write a foreword to this sumptuously produced volume on our Rishis as portrayed in Art and Literature.

When I first came into contact with Chi* Sivaramamurti in 1930, it was in his role as the *aapta sishya* of my most erudite and esteemed colleague, Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswami Sastri. Then as now C S. revelled in the beauties of Sanskrit poetry and in the lines and colours and contours of sculptures and paintings. While the years have added immensely to his knowledge, they could take nothing away from his exuberance and enthusiasm.

Bharat is what she is because of the Rishis. Like any of her major rivers, Ganga, Narmada or Kaveri, the line of the Rishis seems to be a perennially flowing stream enriching the mind and imagination of her common people. If in recent times, singers, saints and seers like Tagore, Bharati, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana, struck responsive chords in millions of human hearts, it was because neither the intellectuals nor the masses would willingly let this great tradition die.

There is no dimension of India's life — be it philosophy or science, drama or poetry, sculpture or architecture, literature or law — that has not been shaped and illumined by the loving labours of her Rishis. They in their turn have been deified and glorified in poems, paintings and statues so that their names and stories and teachings have passed into myths which form the stuff of all living traditions.

For handling this absorbing theme there could hardly be anyone better fitted than C.S. who belongs to this tradition, having been born

*Abbreviation of Chiranjivi, a blessing for long life.

in it and having spent a whole lifetime in expounding it at home and abroad and in illustrating it with his own telling line-sketches as well as through wisely chosen photographs of sculptures.

The illustrations in this volume span the centuries from the second B C. to the eighteenth A.D., while the pen-portraits provide an anthology of poets showering flowery praises on Rishis—Valmiki and Bana on Agastya, Kalidas on Kashyapa, Bhavabhuti on Valmiki, and so on, in a never-ending garland of delight.

K. Swaminathan

Collected Works
of Mahatma Gandhi
New Delhi-22.
31-7-81

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

When I was at Madras in 1979 as Visiting Professor of Art in the Madras University, I was invited by Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu, to deliver the Dr. T.N. Ramachandran Memorial Lectures on the 23rd and 24th April 1979. The theme chosen by me for this talk 'Rishis in Indian Art and Literature' was so fascinating that I later considerably expanded it, in which form it now appears in this book. I am thankful to Dr. Nagaswamy for enabling me to pay my respect to the memory of a great scholar from a galaxy that includes Mahāmahopādhyaya A. Chinnaswami Sastri, Kalāprapūrṇa S.T.G. Varadachari, Dr. P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Professor P.P.S. Sastri, Dr. Kunhan Raja, Dr. A. Sankaran, Dr. T.R. Chintamani, Dr. V. Raghavan and others produced by the stupendous learning and versatile genius of our beloved Professor Mahāmahopādhyāya Vidyāvāchaspati Kulapati Darśanakalānidhi S. Kuppuswami Sastri whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year. At the instance of our beloved Professor who noticed my zeal for a comparative study of Indian Art and Sanskrit Literature I was invited by Dr. Ramachandran to take to the field of Art and Archaeology where I have engaged myself fruitfully for a lifetime. I feel it a great privilege and joy to express my keen sense of gratitude to Dr. Ramachandran. It is unnecessary to repeat that if India can be proud of an outstanding culture it is what it has derived from the simple *Ṛishis* of the noblest thought and highest ethical calibre.

Dr. Nagaswamy readily agreed to the lectures being published in their present enlarged form in a manner worthy of the theme as a well produced book fully illustrated and documented. To Shri Jayant Baxi of the Kanak Publications goes the credit for producing the book with aesthetic taste. To the Archaeological Survey, the National Museum, Madras Museum, Chandigarh Museum, Lucknow Museum, Mathura Museum, Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum, Prince of Wales Museum, Cleveland Museum,

I express my sincere thanks for helping with photos for illustrating the book. Some of the monochrome blocks were kindly lent by Shri Shakti Malik of Abhinav Publications. The colour plate blocks were very kindly lent by the National Museum to enhance the charm and utility of the book for which I am most beholden to both.

As I thank the printers, I cannot help feeling so sad on the demise of Shri Chhotelal Jain of the Navchetan Press who took infinite interest in the printing of the plates. My thanks are also due to the Shaheed Press for speedily printing the text carefully avoiding errors. The index was prepared with special care by Shri. G.S. Bagga to whom I offer my best thanks.

The Foreword has been written by Professor K. Swaminathan, the saintly scholar reputed as the Indian Pandit in English, who ever showered his affection on me from my student days in the Presidency College at Madras, and who, now, as Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, though exceedingly overworked, has found the time to go through the book and offer his blessings as his Foreword. I treasure it and am unable to adequately thank him for it.

C. Sivaramamurti

New Delhi
31st July 1981

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Fig. 79. Sudāmā Lovingly welcomed by Kṛishṇa, late Chera, 18th Century A.D., Trichūr

RISHIS IN ART AND LITERATURE

The *ṛishis* or the sages have been rightly valued in India as supreme. They are even beyond the celestials. They set an example of life itself. How to live is to be learnt by following the way of the sage. Sages are the embodiment of not only learning but the highest of self-control, sacrifice, supreme understanding, childlike innocence, universal love, a feeling of utmost goodwill for the entire world, animals and birds, trees and creepers, lakes, streams and rivers, hills and dales, rocks and hillocks included. The highest seers could see beyond the ordinary ken of mortals, but yet, were the very embodiment of simplicity, the highest acme of contentment, viewing alike everything on earth, nothing so high as to overawe them, neither so low as to be despised.

That is why the *Upanishad* describes the *ṛishi* as the highest even among the *vipras*: ऋषिर्विप्राणाम् *Mahānārāyaṇopanishad* 12.1. When we remember how important *vipra* himself is, from the definition, that one born of a Brāhmaṇa family, and become a *dvija* (twice-born) by sacred ceremonies *(saṁskāra)*, namely, *upanayana* that gives him the status of a *brahmachārin* worthy of the study of the *Veda*, and profound by the study and understanding of the *Veda* itself with its six limbs, the *shaḍaṅgas*, i.e. *śikshā*, *vyākaraṇa*, *chhandas*, *nirukta*, *kalpa* and *jyotisha* and the highest study that leads on to *moksha dharma* which is *Parāvidyā*, the final stage which makes one a *vipra*, it is seen why the unit chosen is *vipra*:

जन्मना ब्राह्मणो प्रोक्तः संस्कारैर्द्विज उच्यते ।
विद्यया याति विप्रत्वं त्रिभिः श्रोत्रिय उच्यते ॥

Thus it can be observed that one satisfying the three conditions and reaching the stage of *vipra* automatically is a *śtrotriya*. A *śtrotriya* is one who is deeply versed in the *Veda*. Even among these *vipras* of whom the highest is the *śrotriya*, the *ṛishi* is the noblest: *ṛishir viprāṇām*, as the one enlightened by the *Veda* and ennobled by *tapas* or penance.

This concept of the *ṛishi* is thus a theme reckoned high even in the earliest Vedic hymns. The idea of the seven *ṛishis* is already familiar in the *Ṛigveda* where they are conceived as our fathers:

अस्माकमत्र पितरस्त आसन् सप्त ऋषयः ।

Ṛigveda 4, 42, 8.

They are enumerated as the seven sacrificial priests *hotṛi*, *potṛi*, *neshṭṛi*, *agnidhṛi*, *praśāstṛi*, *adhvaryu*, *brahmā*, respectively invoker, purifier, leader, kindler, director, ministering priest and praying priest:

तवाग्ने होत्रं तव पोत्रं ऋत्वियं तव नेष्ट्रं त्वं अग्निदृतायतः ।
तव प्रशास्त्रं त्वमध्वरीयसि ब्रह्मा चासि गृहपतिश्च नो दमे ॥

Ṛigveda 2, 1, 2.

and this is continued thereafter:

सप्त जिह्वाः सप्त ऋषयः सप्त धाम प्रियाणि ।

Taittirīya Saṁhitā 1,5,3.

They are individually mentioned sometimes and, also collectively in the plural, as denoting whole families as Bhrigus, Angirasas, Atris and so forth. These two are Gautama and Bharadvāja. These are indeed Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni collectively and individually. These two are Vasishṭha and Kaśyapa. This is Atri like the tongue that eats food:

इमावेव गोतमभरद्वाजौ, अयमेव गौतमः, अयं भरद्वाजः, इमावेव विश्वामित्रजमदग्नी, अयमेव विश्वामित्रः, अयं जमदग्निः, इमावेव वसिष्ठकश्यपौ, अयमेव वसिष्ठः, अय कश्यपः, वागेवात्रिः, वाचा ह्यन्नमद्यते ।

Bṛihadāraṇyakopanishad 2, 2, 4.

The *ṛishis* transformed into stars as known to later myth are known so in the Vedic legend as well. They are *ṛikshas*, stars, apart from being the *ṛishis* like सप्तर्षिषु ह स्म वै पुराक्ष्णा इत्याचक्षते *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2, 1, 2, 4. That is why Kālidāsa refers to *ṛishis* invited that assembled for Rāma's *aśvamedha* not only from the ends of the earth but also from the luminous spheres:

दिग्भ्यो निमन्त्रिताश्चैनमभिजग्मुर्महर्षयः ।
न भौमान्येव धिष्ण्यानि हित्वा ज्योतिर्मयान्यपि ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 15, 59.

The rise of the star Agastya clears the turbid waters:

प्रससादोदयादम्भः कुम्भयोनेर्महौजसः ।

Raghuvaṁśa 4, 21.

On this Mallināṭha comments *agastyodaye jalāni prasīdanti ityāgamaḥ.*

Arundhatī, the consort of Vasishṭha, who is more famous in the epic and Purāṇic literature, though also known to the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 3.9.2., is the only one who takes a place with the principal seers; and an Eastern Chāḷukya frieze of the Saptaṛishis from the Bhīmeśvara temple at Drākshārama (Fig. 1) represents her along with them. She is a star like the seven *ṛishis* as mentioned in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka.* It is no wonder Bhavabhūti makes his own obeisance to her through the mouth of Janaka by making him describe her as he bows to her as the very auspiciousness of the three worlds, adorable to the universe like the goddess of dawn heralding light, by whom even the treasure of all holy lustre and preceptor of all the preceptors, Vasishṭha, considers himself purified:

यया पूतंमन्यो निधिरपि पवित्रस्य महसः
पतिस्ते पूर्वेषामपि खलु गुरूणां गुरुतमः ।
त्रिलोकीमङ्गल्यामवनितललीनेन शिरसा
जगद्वन्द्यां देवीमुपसमिव वन्दे भगवतीम् ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4.10.

Though Atri's saintly wife, who has representation in a Gupta panel from Deogarh (Fig. 2), where she presents Sītā with divine toiletry, dress and ornaments in appreciation of her *pātivratya,* is not known in Vedic hymns, Lopāmudrā, however, as the consort of Agastya, is known to the *Ṛigveda* where there is an explicit dialogue between her and Agastya in a hymn. She laments that she had up to the point of fatigue attended on Agastya for many autumns, nights, days and dawns: age was diminishing her great beauty and women naturally desire the favour of the passion of their spouse:

पूर्वीरहं शरदः शश्रमाणा दोषा वस्तोरुषसो जरयन्तीः ।
मिनाति श्रियं जरिमा तनूनामप्यू नु पत्नीर्वृषणो जगम्युः ॥

Ṛigveda 1.179.1.

And Agastya now confesses that even on him, lost in meditation, had come passion somehow. Lopāmudrā, shy and timid, shall fully enjoy my passion, though I am normally unmoved by thoughts of love:

नदस्य मा रुधत: काम आगन्नित आजातो अमुत: कुतश्चित् ।
लोपामुद्रा वृषणं नी रिणाति धीरमधीरा धयति श्वसन्तम् ॥

Ṛigveda 1.179.4.

Agastya as a true sage of potency thus fostered both penance and love, dug deep at penance and desired equally for powerful progeny, and through the grace of the gods obtained the fruition of his prayer:

अगस्त्य: खनमान: खनित्रै: प्रजामपत्यं बलमिच्छमान: ।
उभौ वर्णावृषिरुग्र: पुपोष सत्या देवेष्वाशिषो जगाम ॥

Ṛigveda 1.179.6.

The *ṛishis* as seen from the above, are often equated with the celestials, and taken with the later as ever intent on the welfare of the world as Bhavabhūti puts it:

सर्वथा ऋषयो देवताश्च श्रेयो विधास्यन्ति ।

Uttararāmacharita 1.

Along with gods like Agni or Yama, the ancient seers are invoked with the sweetest honeyed oblation. Obeisance is offered to the sages born ever so early, the ancient directors of the right path:

यमाय मधुमत्तमं राज्ञे हव्यं जुहोतन ।
इदं नम ऋषिभ्य: पूर्वजेभ्य: पथिकृद्भ्य: ॥

Ṛigveda 10.14.15.

Several of the *ṛishis* are themselves conceived as celestials, as for example, Bṛihaspati who is placed at the head of even the most ancient seers. He occupies three seats with the three fires — connected with Agni — Aṅgiras — who propped apart the ends of the earth by his clear voice, the charming-tongued, that the ancient seers after deep deliberation placed as the foremost among them:

यस्तस्तम्भ सहसा व ज्मो अन्तान् बृहस्पतिस्त्रिषधस्थो रवेण ।
तं प्रत्नास ऋषयो दीध्यान: पुरो विप्रा दधिरे मन्द्रजिह्वम् ॥

Ṛigveda 4.50.1.

Similarly Agni, one of the foremost principal gods of the *Ṛigveda*, next only to Indra in importance, is conceived as a *ṛishi*, a domestic priest, *purohita*, officiating priest, *ṛitvik*, adored by seers, the most ancient and recent:

अग्निमीले पुरोहितम् । यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् ।
अग्निः पूर्वेभिऋषिभिरीड्यो नूतनैरुत । स देवाँ एह वक्षति ।

Ṛigveda 1.1.1-2.

Though a god come with the celestials, देवो देवेभिरागमत् *Ṛigveda* 1.1.5, he is still so close to the humans as a *ṛishi* that he is easy of access like a father to his son and abides with them for their good:

स नः पितेव सूनवे । अग्ने सूपायनो भव । सचस्वा नः स्वस्तये ।

Ṛigveda 1.1.9.

Bhṛigu so named after the root *bhrāj* to shine is almost divine and is closely associated with Agni like Aṅgiras, being born of the sacrificial fire of Varuṇa:

वरुणस्य ऋतौ जातः पावकादिति नः श्रुतम् ।

Mahābhārata 1.5.8.

Like Aṅgiras who is identified with Agni,

यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वं, अग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि । तवेत्तत् सत्यं अङ्गिरः ।

Ṛigveda 1.1.6,

and as in the epic myth, Aṅgiras is made the first son of Agni, Bhṛigu also is made the son of Varuṇa even in Vedic mythology and has the patronymic Vāruṇi:

भृगुर्वै वारुणिः, वरुणं पितरमुपससार ।

Taittirīyopanishad 3.1.1.

This is so in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.1.1 and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 3.34 as well.

The story in the *Mahābhārata* makes Aṅgiras so lustrous by his penance excelling Agni,

पुराङ्गिरा महावाहो चचार तप उत्तमम् ।
आश्रमस्थो महाभागो हव्यवाहं विशेषयन् ॥

Mahābhārata 3.217.8,

that Agni himself asks him to function as fire. Agni says

निक्षिपाम्यहमग्नित्वं त्वमग्निः प्रथमो भव ।

Mahābhārata 3.217.16.,

but the sage being fair and true, prayed of Agni to be the real fire dispelling darkness by his blaze (Fig. 3 and 4), and he would be his chosen adopted son:

कुरु पुण्यं प्रजास्वर्ग्यं भवाग्निस्तिमिरापहः ।
मां च देव कुरुष्वाग्ने प्रथमं पुत्रमञ्जसा ॥
श्रुत्वा चाङ्गिरसो वाक्यं जातवेदास्तथाकरोत् ।
राजन् बृहस्पतिर्नाम तस्याप्यङ्गिरसः सुतः ॥

Mahābhārata 3.217, 16-18.

Even Kaśyapa is associated with Agni and Śraddhā as a son to father and mother:

पिता यत्कश्यपस्याग्निः श्रद्धा माता मनुः कविः ।

Sāmaveda 1.1.2.4.10.

Bhṛigu is the first to receive Agni. Fire brought to Bhṛigu by Mātariśvā is mentioned in a hymn to Agni. The carrier of oblations, famed, banner of sacrifice, kindly protector, messenger of the gods, instant fulfiller, born of two *araṇi* sticks, as it were a great treasure ever so precious, a great domestic priestly friend for sage Bhrigu was brought by the wind god Mātariśvan:

वह्निं यशसं विदथस्य केतुं सुप्राव्यं दूतं सद्योअर्थम् ।
द्विजन्मानं रयिमिव प्रशस्तं रातिं भरद्भृगवे मातरिश्वा ॥

Ṛigveda 1.60.1.

But the legend in the epic makes Bhrigu hastily curse Agni for speaking the truth about the justice in the marital relationship of the sage and his wife Pulomā on being questioned by the rākshasa Puloma, It was the bare truth that, originally promised to Puloma by her father, she was later lawfully wedded to the great sage and she was rightfully his wife as Agni put it:

अथेमां वेददृष्टेन कर्मणा विधिपूर्वकम् ।
भार्यां ऋषिर्भृगुः प्राप्य मां पुरस्कृत्य दानव ॥

Mahābhārata 1.5.33.

As she was forcibly taken away from the hermitage by the demon,

the child in her womb, shining in lustre, slipped out, reduced him to ashes, and saved his mother. This is the famous sage Chyavana, who could so act even as he emerged as a child from the mother's womb:

रोषान्मातुश्च्युतः कुक्षेश्च्यवनस्तेन सोऽभवत् ।

Mahābhārata 1.6.2.

Bhṛigu's curse that Agni should be *sarvabhaksha* eat-all, was, however, partially revoked by Brahmā to appease Agni, that refused to function for the gods and manes carrying *svāhā* or *svadhā* oblations in sacrifices, made him pure and holy, Śuchi and Pāvaka, being *sarvabhaksha* only in his Kravyāda corpseburning aspect:

क्रव्यादा च तनुर्या ते सा सर्वं भक्षयिष्यति ।
यथा सूर्यांशुभिः स्पृष्टं सर्वं शुचि भविष्यति ॥
तथा त्वदर्चिर्निर्दग्धं सर्वं शुचि भविष्यति । ....
अग्निश्च परमां प्रीतिमवाप हृतकल्मषः ॥

Mahābhārata 1.7.23-24,28.

Not a whit less than his father Chyavana was Aurva who was born of Arushī daughter of Manu, like another son Pramati born of Sukanyā daughter of Śaryāti whose son was Ruru. Sukanyā is known as the daughter of Śaryāti and wife of Chyavana even in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.*

स रथं युक्त्वा, सुकन्यां शार्यातीं उपधाय प्रसिष्यन्द स आजगाम यत्रर्षिरास तत् ।
स होवाय । ऋषे नमस्ते यन्नावेदिषं तेनाहिंसिषम् ।
इयं सुकन्या तया तेऽप्रह्नवे ।

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.1.5.6;10, 13:

He yoked the chariot and with Sukanyā Śāryātī (daughter of Śaryāti) he went to where the *ṛishi* was stationed. He said, Salutation Oh sage! unknowingly was this pain caused to you. This is my daughter Sukanyā. By offering her I expiate the wrong I did. The line of Bhṛigu, according to the *Matsyapurāṇa* and correctly so answered in the *pravara*, has Āpnavāna as son of Chyavana and father of Aurva. Aurva was born miraculously from the thigh of his mother and hence his name:

और्वस्तस्यां समभवद्ऊरु भित्वा महायशाः ।

Mahābhārata 1.66.46.

It is possible also that the Chyavana, who married Arushī and begot Aurva, was a descendent of the earlier Chyavana in the line of Pramati and Ruru, and thus after them all, the *pravara* giving the names of the more important *ṛishis* in the *gotra*. The Haihaya princes started a wholesale slaughter of the Bhrigus coveting their wealth. This sudden birth of Aurva of great lustre resulted in his blaze blinding them all, but they got back their sight by supplication to the child:

स भित्वोरु शिशुर्जातो दिवाकर इवापरः ।
दृशैव राजसंघाना जहार सहसा दृशः ॥
अभ्यासे क्षत्रियाः सर्वे प्रसाद्य ब्राह्मण भयात् ।
चक्षूंषि तद्गिरा प्राप्य ययुर्भग्नपराक्रमाः ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 1, 1002-1003.

It is the anger of this boy that blazed forth as Aurva fire, which, fearing that it might destroy the entire world was requested by the manes to be thrown in the ocean Closely related to Bhrigu is Aurva known even in the *Ṛigveda* 10.98.11. From this it is clear that the sage, juvenile or aged, was equally potent. What Kālidāsa has said of the child Sudarśana, a six-year old prince that occupied the Ikshvāku throne with dignity, the word *Mahārāja* fitting him so well like the name *mahānīla*, lustrous sapphire, that cannot fail to shine even in a miniature gem of the variety:

मणौ महानील इति प्रभावादल्पप्रमाणेऽपि यथा न मिथ्या ।
शब्दो महाराज इति प्रतीतस्तथैव तस्मिन् ययुजेऽर्भकेपि ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 18.42,

applies to the sage as well.

Chyavana's youthful transformation at the hands of the Aśvins which is such a famous epic legend is already known to the *Ṛigveda* in the glory of the divine physicians:

युवं च्यवान जरसोऽमुमुक्तम

Ṛigveda 7.71.5.

The Aśvins rescued Atri from distress and darkness:

निरंहसस्तमसः स्पर्तमत्रिम्

Ṛigveda 7.71.5.

The *ṛishi* Dīrghatamas, son of Uchathya, (same as Utathya in the epic), and Mamatā, is known from the *Ṛigveda* almost as in the epic legend and utters a prayer to the Aśvins to protect him. May this prayer addressed to you Oh Aśvins! protect me, son of Uchathya.

उपस्तुतिरौचथ्यमुरुष्येन्मा

Ṛigveda 1.158.4.

He is Māmateya, son of Mamatā, who by the grace of the Aśvins could live long and age only after ten aeons:

दीर्घतमा मामतेयो जुजुर्वान् दशमे युगे ।

Ṛigveda 1.158.6.

So old a seer is Vasishṭha that he is among the gods composing the manes, the kindly forefathers, Soma-loving Vasishṭhas:

ये नः पूर्वे पितरः सोम्यासोऽनूहिरे सोमपीथं वसिष्ठाः ।

Ṛigveda 10.15.8.

Other ancient seers similarly deified as manes are Aṅgirasas, Atharvāṇas, Navagvas and Bhṛigus:

अङ्गिरसो नः पितरो नवग्वा अथर्वाणो भृगवः सोम्यासः ।

Ṛigveda 10,14.6.

The ancient seers Navagva, Aṅgira, Daśagva and Bṛihaspati (here referred to as Saptāsya) had prosperity showered on them in days of yore, and now the divine goddess of light Ushas is asked whether it was to be by an ancient course or a new one for her to shine on us as on Navagva, Aṅgiras, Daśagva and the sevenmouthed Bṛihaspati:

कुवत्स देवीः सनयो नवो वा यमो वभूयादुषसो वो अद्य ।
येना नवग्वे अङ्गिरे दशग्वे सप्तास्ये रेवती रेवदूष ॥

Ṛigveda 4.51,4.

The miraculous birth of sages is equally partially known to the *Vedas* though later elaborated. Though both Vasishṭha and Agastya are born of Mitra and Varuṇa through the Apsaras Urvaśī in the case of Vasishṭha, the birth of Agastya in a pitcher is an elaborate epic legend given by Sāyana on the hymn of the *Ṛigveda.* The hymn that gives the birth of the great Vasishṭha describes him as the son of Mitra and Varuṇa in their love for Urvaśī who with her longing for

him bore him from their fallen drop, celestical in glory, placed gently by all the gods on a lotus blossom:

उतासि मैत्रावरुणो वसिष्ठोर्वश्या ब्रह्मन् मनसोऽधि जातः ।
द्रप्सं स्कन्नं ब्रह्मणा दैव्येन विश्वे देवाः पुष्करे त्वाददन्त ॥

Ṛigveda 7.33.11.

Both Agastya, here called Māna, and Vasishṭha were born from a pitcher into which fell the semen of both Mitra and Varuṇa as they were prayed by hymns at the sacrifice and there arose Māna and then was born Vasishṭha:

सत्रे ह जाताविषिता नमोभिः कुम्भे रेतः सिषिचतुः समानम् ।
ततो ह मान उदियाय मध्यात्ततो जात ऋषिमाहुर्वसिष्ठम् ॥

Ṛigveda 7.33.13.

As the semen of Mitra-Varuṇa that fell in the pitcher was taken out and placed on a lotus blossom by the celestials Vasishṭha's birth is treated as on the ground, only Agastya who arose from the pitcher of the measure of a *śamī* stick and so dwarfish, was also called *māna* or *mānya*, the pitcher itself being a measure. This is explained by Śaunaka and quoted by Sāyana in commenting on the *ṛiks* describing their birth:

स्थले वसिष्ठस्तु मुनिः सम्भूत ऋषिसत्तमः ।
कुम्भे त्वगस्त्यः सम्भूतो जले मात्स्यो महाद्युतिः ।
उदियाय ततोऽगस्त्यः शम्यमात्रो महायशाः ॥
मानेन समितो यस्मात् तस्मान्मान्य इहोच्यते ।
यद्वा कुम्भादृषिर्जातः कुम्भेनापि च मीयते ॥
कुम्भ इत्यभिधानं तु परिमाणस्य लक्ष्यते ।
ततोऽप्सु गृह्यमाणासु वसिष्ठः पुष्करे स्थितः ॥
सर्वत्र पुष्करं तत्र विश्वे देवा अधारयन् ।

Bṛihaddevatā 5,151-155,

Wondering at the *tejas* of Vasishṭha, he is addressed reminding that when Mitra and Varuṇa saw him as a lustre arising from the lightning, that was one birth of his, and his other was when he was brought along similarly by Agastya, his twin:

विद्युतो ज्योतिः परि संजिहानं मित्रावरुणा यदपश्यतां त्वा ।
तत्ते जन्मोतैकं वसिष्ठागस्त्यो यत् त्वा विश आजहार ॥

Ṛigveda 7.33.10.

Vasishṭha's bereavement of his sons, and performance of a sacrifice to obtain progeny and how he got it and overcame Sudāsa is known from the *Yajurveda*:

> वसिष्ठो हतपुत्रो ऽकामयत विदेयं प्रजामभि सौदासान् भवेयमिति स एतमेकस्मान्नपंचाशं अपश्यत् तमाहरत् तेनायजत ततो वै सोविन्दत प्रजामभि सौदासानभवत् ।
>
> *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 7,4,7.1.

Similarly his rivalry with Viśvāmitra is known in the *Ṛigveda*. Śakti, the son of Vasishṭha according to the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.390 is able to render Viśvāmitra unsconscious at the sacrifice of Sudāsa according to the *Bṛihaddevatā* 4,112-113.

> सुदासश्च महायज्ञे शक्तिना गाथिसूनवे ।
> निगृहीतं वलाच्चेतः सोऽवसीदद्विचेतनः ।।

But regaining consciousness Viśvāmitra pronounced *abhiśāpas* or imprecations to destroy the Vasishṭhas.

> विश्वामित्रेण ताः प्रोक्ता अभिशापा इति स्मृताः ।....
> शतधा भिद्यते मूर्धा कीर्तितेन श्रुतेन वा ।।
>
> *Bṛihaddevatā* 4.118,120.

So the rivalry between the Vasishṭhas and Viśvāmitras has its germ in the *Vedas* before elaboration in the epics.

Viśvāmitra, the son of Kuśika according to the *Ṛigveda* 3,33,5 has a special invocation for the rivers Vipāśā (Beas) and Śutudrī (Sutlej) and helps crossing them even in their high floods by the efficacy of his prayer. Oh rivers! Tarry a while your high flood flow at this earnest request of the son of Kuśika who lauds you highly:

> रमध्वं मे वचसे सोम्याय ऋतावरीरुप मुहूर्तमेवैः ।
> प्र सिन्धुमच्छा बृहती मनीषावस्युरह्वे कुशिकस्य सूनुः ।।
>
> *Ṛigveda* 3.33.5.

Viśvāmitra's adoption of Śunaḥśepa and his naming him Devarāta mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is already known from the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* 7.16. The purchase of Śunaḥśepa to be a sacrificial victim and his release when he was bound to the stake is story preserved in some hymns of the *Ṛigveda* 1,24: 5,27. Śunaḥśepa, as a seer, by praising Indra and the Aśvins got a golden celestial car:

स्तूयमानः शश्वदिति प्रीतस्तु मनसा ददौ ।
शुनःशोपाय दिव्यं तु रथं सर्वं हिरण्मयम् ॥

Bṛihaddevatā 3.103.

In the very first sacrifice of the *Purushasūkta*, the sacrificers are the celestials, semi-celestials, Sādhyas and the sages:

तेन देवा अयजन्त साध्या ऋषयश्च ये ।

Ṛigveda 10.90.7.

Ṛishis famous in the epics like Agastya, Kaṇva, Mudgala, Vāmadeva, Atri, Kutsa, Medhyātithi, Uśanā, and the great *ṛishi* Dadhīchi who gave his bones for the preparation of the thunderbolt are known in the *Ṛigveda* and later Vedic literature. Agni is invoked as he that was taken from the Sun, *ṛitādadhi*, and lit by Kaṇva and Medhyātithi shines forth in lustre rushing as hymns are offered to brighten his light:

यमग्नि मेध्यातिथिः कण्व ईध ऋतादधि ।
तस्य प्रेष्यो दिदीयुस्तमिमा ऋचस्तमग्निं वर्धयामसि ॥

Ṛigveda 1.36.11.

Dadhīchi is called Dadhyañch, and the killing of Vṛitra with the bones of Dadhyañch is also a Vedic episode. A *ṛik* hemistich describes how Indra, unassailable by others, killed ninetynine Vṛitra demons with the bones of Dadhīcha:

इन्द्रो दधीचो अस्थभिर्वृत्राण्यप्रतिष्कुतः ।
जघान नवतीर्नव ।

Ṛigveda 1.84.13.

There are other Vedic *ṛishis* like Virūpas associated with Aṅgirasas, Navagvas, Daśagvas, Priyamedha, Atharvan, Turvaśa.

The legend of Paraśurāma giving the entire earth to Kaśyapa whence its name Kāśyapī is almost answered in the association of the earth with the utterance of Kaśyapa and established by the Almighty for all beings:

मृत्तिके ब्रह्मदत्तासि कश्यपेनाभिमन्त्रिता ।

Mahānārayaṇopanishad 1.39.

Kaśyapa as an ancient seer has mention in the *Ṛigveda* where the hymn addresses him, Oh sage Kaśyapa, creator of hymns! By

your laudation in stentorian voice bow to the king Soma, who was born the lord of vegetation, flow for Indra flow:

ऋषे मन्त्रकृतां स्तोमैः कश्यपोद्वर्धयन्गिरः ।
सोमं नमस्य राजानं यो जज्ञे वीरुधां पतिरिन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

Ṛigveda 9.114.2

He occurs in the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* 3,62 and the text of the *Sāmaveda* 1,1,2,4,10,14,2,3,2. He is described in the *Bṛihaddevatā* as son of Marīchi and grandson of Prajāpati and the husband of thirteen daughters of Daksha, Aditi, Diti and others. This enumeration is almost the same as in the *Mahābhārata*:

प्राजापत्यो मरीचिर्हि मारीचः कश्यपो मुनिः ।
तस्य देव्योऽभवन् जाया दक्षकन्यास्त्रयोदश ॥
अदितिर्दितिर्दनुः काला दनायुः सिंहिका मुनिः ।
क्रोधा विश्वा वारिष्ठा च सुरभिर्विनता तथा ॥
कद्रूश्चेति.....

Bṛihaddevatā 5, 143-145.

Atri is an early Vedic seer counted along with Dadhyañch, Aṅgiras, Priyamedha, Manu, Kaṇva and others given in the *Ṛigveda* 1.139.9. The Aśvins made Atri, grown old in prayers to them, so energetic as to attain his end like a speeding horse as they had also made Kakshīvat regain youth like a chariot renewed:

त्वं चिदत्रि ऋतजुरमर्थमश्वं न यातवे ।
कक्षीवन्तं यदी पुना रथं न कृणुथो नवम् ॥

Ṛigveda 10,143.1.

They similarly cooled the fiery blaze from which suffered Atri, just as they protected sage Rebha from deep surrounding danger:

युवं रेभं परिषूतेरुरुष्यथो हिमेन घर्मं परितप्तमत्रये ।

Ṛigveda 1,119.6.

Atri, the great sage that he was, could set the sun bright again dispelling the gloom come over him from the demonaic Svarbhānu (Rāhu), where Sāyana says he set his own eye, an episode transformed into the story of the lunar light in later mythology. Atri set in the sky the eye of Sūrya whose light was eclipsed by removing the illusory darkness of Svarbhānu:

अत्रिः सूर्यस्य दिवि चक्षुराधात् स्वर्भानोरप माया अधुक्षत् ।

Ṛigveda 5.40,8.

Similarly Gotama is another of the well known ancient *ṛishis* famous in Vedic literature. A prayer of Nodhā son of Gotama is specially mentioned to hail Indra though he had only a curse from Gotama according to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But the Vedic Indra, it should be remembered, was a nobler celestial personality. Oh! most ancient Indra! with green horses yoked to your chariot, leader on the right path, come quickly at daybreak, enriched by this prayer of ours, a new one composed by sage Nodhā son of Gotama:

सनायते गोतम इन्द्र नव्यमक्षद्ब्रह्म हरियोजनाय ।
सुनीथाय न सवसान नोधाः प्रातर्मक्षू धियावसुर्जगम्यात् ॥

Ṛigveda 1.62.13.

Gotama's own prayer to Agni is also spoken of highly. Oh Jātaveda! keen observer of all! we incessantly pray to you with the prayer put forth by sage Gotama extolling your splendour. We pray to you with those splendid hymns that Gotama worshipped you desirous of wealth:

अभि त्वा गोतमा गिरा जातवेदो विचर्षणे । द्युम्नैरभि प्र णोनुमः ।
तमु त्वा गोतमो गिरा रायस्कामो दुवस्यति । द्युम्नैरभि प्र णोनुमः ॥

Ṛigveda 1,78,1-2.

Another of Gotama's prayers to Agni is so powerful as to prevail in success. I overcome even the mighty ones by my relationship with the utterances of our father Gotama that have great power.

महो रुजामि बन्धुता वचोभिस्तन्मा पितुर्गोतमादन्वियाय ।

Ṛigveda 4,4,11.

The Maruts are also so kind to the great sage Gotama that they take up the clouds in a different direction towards where was sage Gotama and pour a shower to quench his thirst at his hermitage:

जिह्मं नुनुदेऽवतं तया दिशासिचन्नुत्सं गोतमाय तृष्णजे ।

Ṛigveda 1,85,11.

In deriving Bṛihaspati or Brahmaṇaspati speech is taken as *Bṛihatī* and *Brahma* and the derivation is

वाग्वै बृहती तस्या एष पतिः । तस्मादु बृहस्पतिः ।
वाग्वै ब्रह्म, तस्य एष पतिः । तस्मादु ब्रह्मणस्पतिः ।

Bṛihadāraṇyakopanishad 1,3,20,21

The word *Bṛiḥ* or *Brahmaṇa* is also taken as prayer i.e. lord of prayer. Another derivation is

बृहतां देवानां पालयिता इन्द्रपुरोहितः under
स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ।

Mahānārāyaṇopanishad 1.43.

He is always a celestial and a priestly seer. On the line giving that the people themselves bow voluntarily to the king who places the priest above all as the foremost,

तस्मै विशः स्वयमेवा नमन्ते यस्मिन् ब्रह्मा राजनि पूर्व एति ।

Ṛigveda 4.50.8.

the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 8.26.9 explains *purohitam evaitad āha.* Aghamarshaṇa is a sage who is purifying like Varuṇa and for this a prayer is put forth to him पुनात्वघमर्षणः *Mahānāyaṇopanishad* 1.66.

Like Bhṛigu Vāruṇi who asked his father to explain the Supreme Brahman to him, there is a similar request from Āruṇi son of Prajāpati and Suparṇā:

प्राजापत्यो हारुणिः सुप्रनेयः प्रजापतिं पितर-
मुपससार किं भगवन्तः परं वदन्तीति ।

Mahānārāyaṇopanishad 79.1.

Though Luders believes that there may be some old elements contained in the name Riśyaśṛiṅga, there is no Vedic text to support this epic legend. Similarly though Aurva is known to the *Ṛigveda* and later Vedic texts as a descendent of Bhṛigu in the *Kauśītaki Brāhmaṇa* 30.5., and is from Atri according to the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 7.1.8.1, the strange birth from the thigh of his mother as given in the *Mahābhārata* is probably earlier unknown. But these contexts of miraculous births have resulted in such a one being provided even for the famous prince Siddhārtha who was later to become a sage as Śākyamuni, and Siddhārtha is born, not in the natural way, but from the right side of his mother as she stood under the Sāl tree, a miraculous birth as Aśvaghosha specially illustrates. Then when the Pushya star was

propitious was born a son for the weal of the world from the side of the queen pure by her rigour:

तस्याश्च देव्या व्रतसस्कृताया. पार्श्वात्सुतो लोकहिताय जज्ञे ।

Buddhacharita 1.10.

His birth was as miraculous as that of Aurva born from the thigh, Prithu from the hand, Māndhātā equal to Indra from the head, and Kakshīvat from the armpit:

ऊरोर्यथौर्वस्य पृथोश्च हस्तान्मान्धातुरिन्द्रप्रतिमस्य मूर्ध्नः ।
कक्षीवतश्चैव भुजासदेशत्तथाविधं तस्य बभूव जन्म ॥

Buddhacharita 1.11.

This theme became a great favourite in Buddhist sculpture of every school and date in India (Fig. 5) and in South and South East Asia.

Though it is not certain for some scholars whether Kapila mentioned in the line:

ऋषिं प्रसूतं कपिल यस्तमग्रे ज्ञानैर्बिभर्ति जायमान च पश्चात् ।

Śvetāśvataropanishad 5.2,

is the author of Sāmkhya, there is no improbability in it, as the very ancestral capital of the Śākyas was named after him, a seer of great antiquity, and he is famous in ancient myth and legend, with representations even so far away as in Śrī Laṅkā (Fig. 6), and is moreover considered one of the incarnations of the Lord. Aśvaghosha has a special proud reference to Kapila in the name Kapilavāstu:

आसीद्विशालोन्नतसानुलक्ष्म्या पयोदपङ्क्त्येव परीतपार्श्वम् ।
उदग्रधिष्ण्य गगनेऽवगाढं पुरं महर्षेः कपिलस्य वास्तु ॥

Buddhacharita 1.2.

He repeats the association of the great Kapila and his pupil Āsuri, the former hallowed as an incarnation of Vishṇu in the *Mahābhārata*, in his verse

सशिष्य कपिलश्चेह् प्रतिबुद्धिरिति स्मृति. ।

Buddhacharita 12.21.

Śunaḥśepa rescued from Varuṇapāśa through the grace of Viśvāmitra in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story is similarly rescued from the same Varuṇapāśa in the *Ṛigveda*. Oh, Varuṇa! Bowing to you with glorious

hymn I approach you and adoring you with oblations. Listen without disregard to my prayer and pray do not take away my life. Night and day I was told so by the wise ones that know, and this thought in my mind also tells me so. May that Lord Varuṇa release us, who called for, released Śunaḥśepa tied to the stake:

तत्त्वा यामि ब्रह्मणा वन्दमानस्तदा शास्ते यजमानो हविर्भिः ।
अहेडमानो वरुणेह बोध्युरुशंस मा न आयुः प्रमोषीः ॥
तदिन्नक्तं तद्दिवा मह्यमाहुस्तदयं केतो हृदा आ वि चष्टे ।
शुनःशेपो यमाह्वदभीतः सो अस्मान् राजा वरुणो मुमोक्तु ॥

Ṛigveda 1,24,11-12.

This is also given in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 5,2,1,3. But the legend nearer the epic is only in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7,13-18.

Similarly, Riśyaśringa known both in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* as the son and pupil of sage Vibhaṇḍaka, is the teacher of the latter in the *Vaṁśa Brāhmaṇa*. Peculiar derivations of the names of certain *ṛishis* even in later Vedic literature, like Vātaraśanas, wind-girt, Vaikhānasas and Vālakhilyas,

स तपस्तप्त्वा शरीरमधूत । तस्य यन्मासमासीत् ततोरुणाः केतवो वातरशना ऋषय उदतिष्ठन् । ये नखास्ते वैखानसाः । ये वालास्ते वालखिल्याः ।

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 1.23,

assumed greater elaboration in epic legendary accounts. The *Rāmāyaṇa* mentions seers in severe penance like Vaikhānasas, Vālakhilyas, Saṁprakshālas, Marīchipas, Aśmakuṭṭas, Patrāhāras, Dantolūkhalins, Unmajjakas, Gātraśayyas, Aśayyas, Anavakāśikas, Salilāhāras, Vāyubhakshas, Ākāśanilayas and Sthaṇḍilavāsins:

वैखानसा वालखिल्याः संप्रक्षाला मरीचिपाः ।
अश्मकुट्टाश्च बहवः पत्राहाराश्च तापसाः ॥
दन्तोलूखलिनश्चैव तथैवोन्मज्जकाः परे ।
गात्रशय्या अशय्याश्च तथैवानवकाशिकाः ॥
मुनयः सलिलाहारा वायुभक्षास्तथापरे ।
आकाशनिलयाश्चैव तथा स्थण्डिलवासिनः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2,6,2-4.

The Vaikhānasas subsist either on roots, fruits or flowers,

मूलैरेके फलैरेके पुष्पैरेके दृढव्रताः ।

and maintain complete celibacy. That is why Dushyanta asks whether

Śakuntalā would be a Vaikhānasa opposed to all acts of love till she was given away in marriage by her father:

वैखानसं किमनया व्रतमा प्रदानाद् व्यापाररोधि मदनस्य निषेवितव्यम् ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 1.23.

The Vālakhilyas are sixtythousand *ṛishis* of great power and piety born of Kratu and Samnati, that precede Sūrya hailing him with prayers:

वालखिल्याः सहस्राणि षष्टिर्ब्रह्मर्षयोऽमलाः ।
पुरतोऽभिमुखं यान्ति स्तुवन्तस्तुतिभिर्विभुम् ॥

Bhāgavata 12.11.

They are no more than half a thumb, liliputian in size, but titanic in penance:

अथापश्यदृषीन् ह्रस्वानंगुष्ठोदरवर्ष्मणः ।

Mahābharata 1.31.8.

The representation of Sūrya on the Lālā Bhagat pillar (Fig. 7) gives these dwarf sages preceding the solar chariot as Kālidāsa has it,

विरराज रथप्रष्ठैर्वालखिल्यैरिवांशुमान् ।

Raghuvaṁśa 15.10.

They are also Marīchipas, drinking only solar rays. The Vātaraśanas of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* who are unclad but only wind-girt are Vāyubhakshas in the *Rāmāyaṇa* subsisting on air:

वातभक्षा निराहारा तप्यन्ती भस्मशायिनी ।

Rāmāyaṇa 1.48.30.

Patrāhāras subsist on mere dry leaves, and as Pārvatī in her attitude of penance gave up even that, she was called Aparṇā:

तदप्यपाकीर्णमतः प्रियंवदां वदन्त्यपर्णेति च तां पुराविदः ॥

Kumārasambhava 5.28.

Unmajjakas are *ṛishis* like Saubhari or Chyavana in deep penance immersed for years in the deep waters of rivers like the Yamunā:

वह्वृचश्च सौभरिर्नाम ऋषिरन्तर्जलं द्वादशाब्दं कालमुवास ।

Vishṇupurāṇa 4.2.20.

Sthaṇḍilavāsins are ever constantly on the floor in rigour of heat and cold and sleep on the bare ground:

अशेत सा वाहुलतोपधायिनी निषेदुषी स्थण्डिल एव केवलम् ॥

Kumārasambhava 5.12.

Aśmakuṭṭas eat stones by grinding them with their teeth. Salilāhāras live just on water as Rāma did at Śṛiṅgiberapura for a day. The long periods of penance are already envisaged in the *Ṛigveda* where sages lost in meditation are silent for months and make utterances breaking their silence after ever so long like frogs that croak at the approach of the rains:

संवत्सरं शशयाना ब्राह्मणा व्रतचारिणः ।
वाचं पर्जन्यजिन्वितां प्र मण्डूका अवादिषुः ॥

Ṛigveda 7.103.1.

It is this *kāshṭhamauna* of Śamīka that was misunderstood by Parīkshit when he went to his hermitage but could not be spoken to and welcomed.

ततो राजा क्षुत्श्रमार्तस्तं मुनिं स्थाणुवत् स्थितम् ।
मौनव्रतधरं शान्तं सद्यो मन्युवशं गतः ॥

Mahābhārata 1.49.28

Kṛishṇa Devakīputra is a *rājaṛishi* sage, disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa who by his teaching made him free from desires and stressed that at the final moment of life one should take refuge in three thoughts 'You are indestructible, unshaken and the very essence of life. On this there are these two *ṛik* verses. Moving on from the primal seed, high up beyond darkness and higher than the heavens is seen the highest light and we attain the Sun, the highest celestial among the celestials, the highest light, yea, the highest light:

तद्धैतद्घोर आङ्गिरसः कृष्णाय देवकीपुत्रायोक्त्वोवाच ।
अपिपास एव स वभूव । सोऽन्तवेलायामेतत्त्रयं प्रतिपद्येत् ।
अक्षितमसि । अच्युतमसि । प्राणसंशितमसीति ।
तत्रैते द्वे ऋचौ भवतः । आदिति प्रत्नस्य रेतसः ।
उद्वयं तमसस्परि ज्योतिः पश्यन्त उत्तरं स्वः पश्यन्त
उत्तरम् । देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तममिति ।
ज्योतिरुत्तममिति ॥

Chāndogyopanishad 3.17.6-7.

The epic glory of the *Bhagavadgītā* by the *Gītāchārya* (Fig. 8 and 9). has its germ in this beautiful, simple, short passage of the *Upanishad.* The elaboration of the *ṛishi* theme in the Vedic period itself, some of them known as very early and others new,

ये च पूर्वे ऋषयः ये च नूत्नाः इन्द्र ब्रह्माणि जनयन्त विप्राः ।

Ṛigveda 7.22.9.

reaches a climax in the epic and *Purāṇa* that becomes a maze no doubt; but this is the noblest theme that has caused the imagination of the *Paurāṇika* and *Pāṭhaka* to stress the highest codes of ethical life not only by narrations, quoting here is an ancient parable:

अत्राप्युदाहरन्तीममितिहासं पुरातनम् ।

repeated by Śākyamuni in his *Jātakas* and *Aṭṭakathā*, in the *Ākhyānas* and *Avadānas*, but also elaborated in the conduct of life in the *Smṛitis* and *Gṛihyasūtras* also authored by *ṛishis* like Manu, Yājñavalkya, Vasishṭha, Nārada, Parāśara, Śankhalikhita, Devala and others. No wonder Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita describes them as the kinsmen of the entire world, so oceanic in their compassion, like a father to his sons in their kindly instructions distinctly spoken, which however we ignore in our blind infatuation mountain-like in its magnitude, superciliously even questioning who indeed is that Vyāsa, Manu or Yājñavalkya:

को नु व्यासः क इव स मनुः कोन्वसौ याज्ञवल्क्यो
यैरुद्धुष्टं हितमसकृदस्मासु पित्रेव पुत्रे ।
पश्यामस्तान् निरुपधिकृपासागरान् लोकबन्धून्
पश्यामोऽस्मान् निरवधितमःक्ष्माधरान् ब्रह्मबन्धून् ॥

Śāntivilāsa 24.

Aśvaghosha lays stress on the *muni* aspect of Siddhārtha even at the moment of his royal birth as at his birth the celestials of Tushita heaven were pleased as well as those of Śuddhāvāsa in anticipation of the glory of the great Dharma he was to expound in his compassion for the living beings, and the Supreme One was born with the banner of the highest good for all in his hand, himself reaching the pinnacle of fame, shining with an effulgence of peace, as if the very embodiment of righteousness:

तुतुषुस्तुषिताश्चैव शुद्धावासाश्च देवताः ।
सद्धर्मबहुमानेन सत्वानां चानुकम्पया ॥
समाययौ यशःकेतुं श्रेयःकेतुकरः परः ।
बभ्राजे शान्तया लक्ष्म्या धर्मो विग्रहवानिव ॥

Saundarananda 2, 55-56.

That is why Amarasiṁha in his *Amarakośa* repeats the word *muni* thrice in recounting his names

मुनीन्द्रः श्रीघनः शास्ता मुनिः शाक्यमुनिस्तु यः ।

It is therefore to be expected that an aspect of Buddha with the *jaṭā* of a *muni* should be a special form of his in art. Such a one is the Buddha from Katrā with a single thick dextral curl projecting forth on the head as a special form of *jaṭā* even as Śiva has a special *jaṭā* called *kaparda*. This is a unique form of Buddha's *ushṇīsha*-cum-*jaṭā* (Fig. 10).

The *Vedas* are the breath of the Almighty: *yasya niḥśvasitam vedāḥ*. The four faces of Brahmā are intended for the four *Vedas* to be pronounced with their appropriate intonation, *svara*. Brahmā's four faces represent the four *Vedas*: that facing the east is for the *Ṛigveda*, the one to the south is for the *Yajus*, the western one for the *Sāma* and the northern is for the *Atharva*. He carries the *Vedas* in these four mouths and his holding them is indicated by his *kamaṇḍalu* or water vessel. The *akshamālā* or the rosary is a suggestion of time and eternity that he controls as he reckons time. According to the root *kal* to reckon, time itself is called *kāla*. He wears the deer skin *kṛishṇājina* which has a double shade whitish and dark, indicating the bright and dark fortnights and the sacrificial days of the new moon and the full moon. There are seven *lokas*, worlds, *Bhūḥ*, *Bhuvaḥ*, *Suvaḥ*, *Mahaḥ*, *Janaḥ*, *Tapaḥ*,

Figure 11. Brahmā on seven swans, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D., Elephaṇṭā

Satyam. He is the lord of these; and these form the seven swans that lightly bear his chariot (Fig. 11 and 12). The lotus that arises from the navel of Vishṇu is the earth itself, of which the great Meru mountain is the central lotus peri carp, where the lord is seated in *padmāsana,* like a king on the throne in all his royal state, in his world where, in an attitude of meditation, with his eyes closed, he looks at the world observing all that happens.

All the verdure of the earth, the herbs, are the locks (*jaṭās*) of Brahmā who occupies the entire expanse as the sustainer of the universe, and the illuminating sources of knowledge, of which he is the lord, are the ornaments that adorn him. This is the great form of the formless who is yet the form of the entire universe and, as the foremost in the universe, he upholds it all through this divine form of his He is the lord of all *devas,* is the god of the gods, *devavaraḥ* and adored by all:

ब्रह्मा देववरो ज्ञेयः सर्वभूतनमस्कृत. ।

His colour is golden red and of the nature of *rajas, aruṇam rajaso varṇam,* and the tinge is like that of the tip of the lotus petal,

....तेन पद्माग्रसंनिभ. ।
ऋग्वेदः पूर्ववदनं यजुर्वेदस्तु दक्षिणम् ।
पश्चिमं सामवेदः स्यादाथर्वणमथोत्तरम् ॥
ये वेदास्ते मुखा ज्ञेयाश्चतस्रो वाहवो दिश. ।
आप एव जगत्सर्वं स्थावरं जङ्गमं तथा ॥
ताश्च धारयते ब्रह्मा तेन हस्ते कमण्डलुः ।
अक्षमाला विनिर्दिष्टा कालस्तु ब्रह्मण. करे ॥
कलनात् सर्वभूताना काल इत्यभिधीयते ।
यज्ञं वितन्वते सन्तः शुक्लाशुक्लेन कर्मणा ॥
शुक्लाशुक्लमतो ज्ञेयं वास. कृष्णाजिनं विभोः ।
भूलोकश्च भुवो लोक· स्वर्लोकोऽथ महत् तथा ॥
जनस्तपश्च सत्यं च सप्त लोका· प्रकीर्तिताः ।
ये लोकास्ते रथे हंसा ब्रह्मणः परमेष्ठिन. ॥
विष्णुनाभौ समुप्पंन्न यत्पद्मं सा मही द्विज ।
मेरुस्तु कर्णिका तस्य विज्ञेया राजसत्तम ॥
सर्वत्र पथिवस्थैर्यं ध्यानबन्धमत. स्थितम् ।
पद्मासनेन भगवान् विधत्ते पार्थिवेन तु ॥

आत्मनः परमं धाम रूपहीनं विचिन्तयेत् ।
दृष्ट्यर्थं जगतामास्ते ध्यानसंमीलितेक्षणः ॥
तथैवोपधयो राजन् जगद्धारणकारणाः ।
ब्रह्मणस्ता जटा ज्ञेयाः सर्वगस्य महात्मनः ॥
प्रकाशकानि लोकस्य विद्यास्थानानि यानि च ।
तस्याभरणजातानि ज्ञेयानि परमेष्ठिनः ॥
एतद्धि तस्याप्रतिमस्य रूपं तवेरितं सर्वजगन्मयस्य ।
एवं शरीरेण जगत् समग्रं संधारयत्येव जगत्प्रधानः ॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3,46,7-19

The *ṛishis* are the direct offspring of Brahmā himself. That is the importance of the *ṛishis*. Even some of the celestials are born of the *ṛishis*. As the offspring of Brahmā the *ṛishis* are all closely associated with the *Vedas* and as the seers of the hymns of the *Vedas* as the life breath and fragrance of Brahmā himself are the *Vedas*. A sculpture from Aihoḷe belonging to the eighth century and of early Western Chāḷukya workmanship now in the Prince of Wales Museum, is a beautiful representation of Brahmā adored by the *ṛishis* (Fig. 13). How the *ṛishis* adore Brahmā as Pitāmaha, the grandfather of the gods and the *ṛishis*, is given beautifully by Bāṇa in his *Harshacharita*. The row of seven swans that he mentions carrying him up lightly in the sky are represented so in almost all the imposing Vākāṭaka panels of Śiva in various forms in Elephaṇṭā (Fig. 12). The swans are so light in their flight that as a fleet they carry Brahmā along:

विश्रान्तमिव विततपक्षतिना वियति पितामहविमानहंसयूथेन ।

Harshacharita 7 p. 335.

Even in that majesty Brahmā, who, as Krishṇa has put it in another context, that he acts all the time, only to set an example for the world to act by emulating him, though really he has no purpose in his action to attain anything unobtained as he is beyond all such:

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन ।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥
यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

Bhagavadgītā 3, 27.31

also acts, arising from his lotus seat in the evening, as Bāṇa vividly describes, after dissolving the assembly of gods and sages, resting his

hand on the shoulder of Nārada, to perform the appropriate ritual of the evening *sandhyā* prayer:

विसर्जितसुरासुरमुनिमण्डलः ससंभ्रमोपगतनारदस्कन्ध-
विन्यस्तवामहस्तपल्लवः समुचिताह्निककरणायोदतिष्ठत् ।

Harshacharita 1. p. 21.

The lord of lords, Śiva himself, does not escape this setting of an example in a disciplined tenor of life. Utprekshāvallabha fancies that the goddess of Twilight is indeed most fortunate, at the very sight of whom, the wielder of the *pināka* bow (Śiva) joyously loosens the knots of his decorated cluster of *jaṭās*, and in the presence of Devī herself, starts dancing wildly without the least restraint:

धन्या हि सा भगवती दिवसान्तसन्ध्या
यामागतां भुवि सुवीक्ष्य पिनाकपाणिः ।
विश्लिष्टबन्धनजटाभरणः स हर्षा-
द्दौर्या. समक्षमपि नृत्यति वीतशंकः ॥

Bhikshāṭanakāvya 31, 15.

Dance is the supreme offering in *pūjā* ritual. Śrī Harsha almost identifies Devī with Sandhyā and makes Śiva dance before her placing her as a witness of this glorious dance as a connoisseur. Śiva as Mahānaṭa or the Supreme Dancer, meditates on the great goddess of Twilight, aglow with the crimson hue of red arsenic, though deficient as an accomplished dancer, and now dances perhaps in the glory of the (setting) sun, creating lovely flexions, *aṅgahāras*, his body, the sky itself, garlanded with stars:

महानटः किंनु समानुरागे सध्याय संध्यां कुनटीमपीशाम् ।
तनोति तन्वा वियतापि ताराश्रेणीस्रजा सांप्रतमङ्ग हारम् ॥

Naishadhīyacharita 22, 7.

The pun here is on the words *mahanaṭa*, *kunaṭī* and *aṅgahāra*. *Kunaṭī* 'red arsenic' means literally 'bad dancer', which is contrasted with *mahānaṭa*, great dancer. The sky is one of the forms of Śiva. Evening being the time for Śiva's dance, he is described as dancing in his sky form, the twinkling of the stars being the rhythm of his dance. Devī or Īśā, the great goddess, the mistress of the worlds, bright in energy like red arsenic (*kunaṭī*) is deficient in dancing (*kunaṭī*), in comparison with Mahānaṭa the Premier Dancer, Śiva. Śiva dances in the evening,

sandhyā, and adores Devī as the goddess Sandhyā, placing her as a great connoisseur of his dance as seen in the *Pradoshastava*. And there are many other descriptions of Śiva engaged in *sandhyopāsanā*. A fine Kāngrā painting (Fig. 14) is an excellent illustration of the theme. A mural from the Śiva temple at Ettumānur ilustrates with what inordi .ate interest the *ṛishis* watch his dance (Fig. 15).

It is no wonder that the noble *ṛishis* who are the foremost in setting an example to the world in *nityakarma*, in most worshipful attitude offer *en masse* in a lovely to behold whole forest of hands brought together in *añjali*, the holy water as *arghya* in twilight worship *sandhyā:*

वन्दारुमुनिवृन्दारकवध्यमानवन्धुरसन्ध्याञ्जलिवने ।

Harshacharita 1 p. 23.

This *arghya* is followed by their sitting on the sand dunes of the celestial river purifying the place as they engage themselves in the *japa* or repeating of the *gāyatrī* hymn:

सन्ध्योपासनासीनतपस्विपङ्क्तपूतपुलिने...मन्दाकिनीजले ।

Harshacharita 1 p. 24.

Bāṅa never tires of describing the holy atmosphere created even in the *tīrtha* itself, the bank of the holy celestial river. The celestial river is holy to that extent that Śiva himself is praised in his *vibhūti* or glory as *Tīrthya* and salutation is offered to him: नमस्तीर्थ्याय च, *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 4, 5, 8. Sāyaṇa explains this as abiding in the vicinity of holy spots like Prayāga: तीर्थे प्रयागादौ संनिहितस्तीर्थ्यः । We may here bring to our mind the description of Śiva on the banks of sacred rivers like Narmadā or Kāverī:

कावेरिकानर्मदयोः पवित्रसमागमे सज्जनतारणाय ।
सदैव मान्धातृपुरे वसन्तमोंकारमीशं शिवमेकमीडे ॥

Dvādaśajyotirliṅgastotra 4

Triveṇīsaṅgama is one of the great *tīrthas* and is rightly represented in early Gupta sculpture. Śiva is both *Tīrthya* and *Kūlya* as also *Varshya*, *Avarshya*, *Meghya*, respectively of the sacred spots, on river banks, of the rain showers, of the water independent of rain, of the

Fig. 14. Śivaś dance at Twilight, Kāngrā school, 18th century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta.

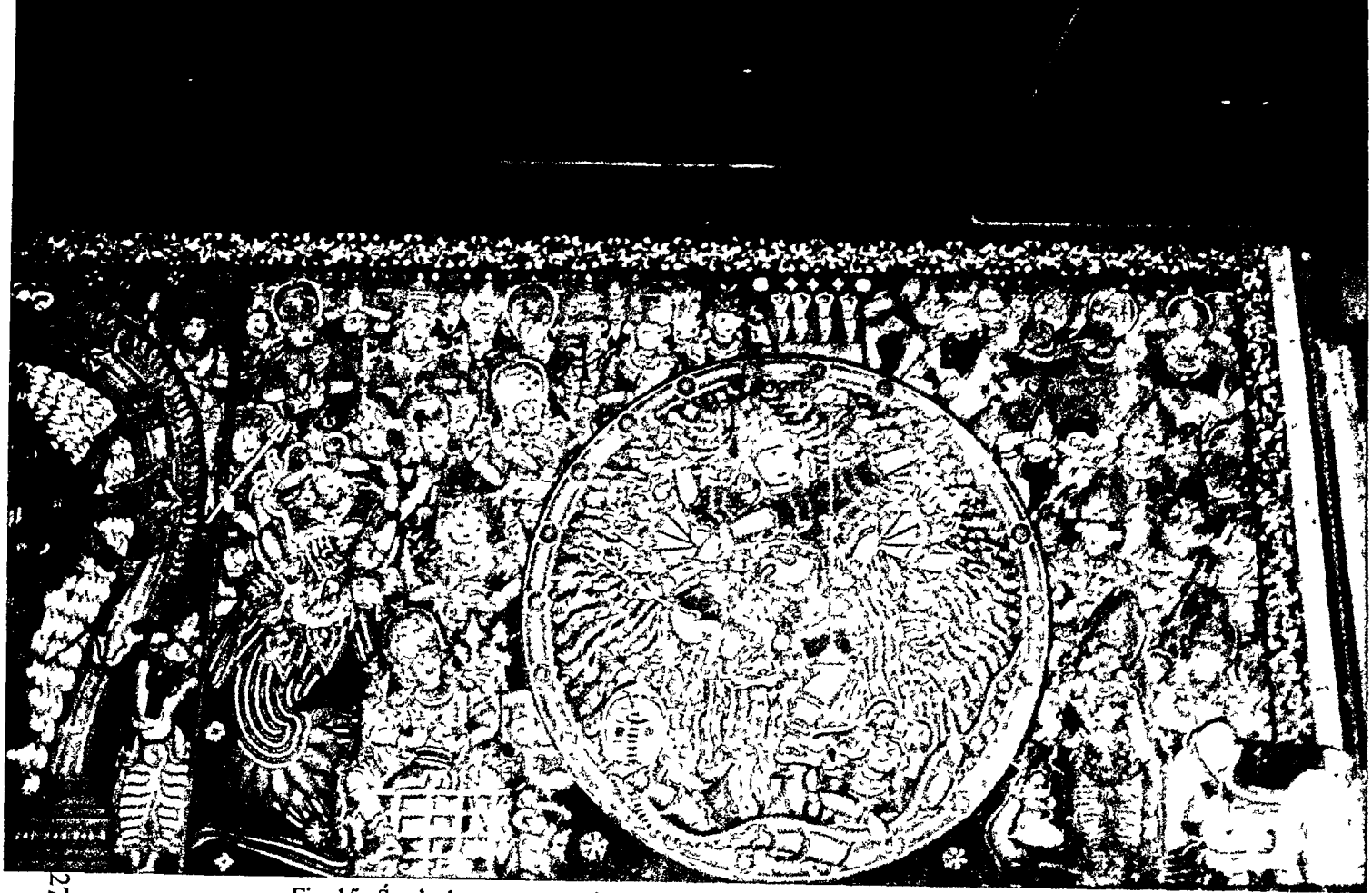

Fig. 15. Śiva's dance witnessed by celestials and *ṛishis*, late Chera, Ettumānur, Kerala.

water-laden cloud. The sages thus eternally bathe him as *abhishekapriya* (Fig. 16) and as *jalamayamurti* of the form of water itself, the Gaṅgādhara form (Fig. 17 and 18) suggested in the epithets *Sūrmya*, *Srotasya* and *Nādya:*

> नमो वर्ष्याय चावर्ष्याय च नमो मेघ्याय च···नमः स्रोतस्याय च···नमः सूर्म्याय च···नमो नाद्याय च
>
> *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 4,5,7-9.

That is why, going into an ecstasy over the Achchhoda lake, where *anusṭhāna* or the daily ritual is so pleasant, Bāṇa describes how here Brahmā, the grandfather of the gods, more than once fills his holy vessel (*kamaṇḍalu*) with water, how often the cluster of Vālakhilya *ṛishis* love to do their *sandhyā* worship at this very spot, how frequently wading in this water Sāvitrī would gently break the blooming lotuses from their stalks for worshipping the deity, how it is purified by the holy band of the seven *ṛishis* bathing a myriad times in it, the water so pure used by the Siddha damsels to wash their garments made of the bark of the celestial tree Kalpa. The water of the lake, mixed with the dripping ambrosial liquid of the lunar crescent crest jewel of Śiva, ruffled by his immersing and rising a hundred times, as he plunges into it from Kailāsa situated in such close proximity, creates the illusion as it were of the stream of feminine charm *(lāvaṇya)* from the left side of Śiva's hermaphrodite form flowing into it. The lake could create such an overpowering admiration for its essential grandeur and charm:

> आसन्नकैलासावतीर्णस्य च शतशो भगवतः खण्डपरशोर्मज्जनोन्मज्जनक्षोभचलितचूडामणिचन्द्रखण्डच्युतेनामृतरसेन जलक्षालितवामार्धकपोलगलितलावण्यप्रवाहानुकरिणा मिश्रितजलं...असकृत् पितामहपरिपूरितकमण्डलुपरिपूतजल, अनेकशो वालखिल्यकदम्बककृतसंध्योपासनं, बहुशः सलिलावतीर्णसावित्रीभग्नदेवार्चनकमलसहस्रं, सहस्रशः सप्तर्षिमण्डलस्नानपवित्रीकृत, सर्वदा सिद्धवधूधौतकल्पलतावल्कलपुण्योदकम् ।
>
> *Kādambarī* p. 232.

Bāna describes Brahmā seated on a lotus at ease attended by Indra and the celestials, the seven sages *(saptaṛishis)*, the lords of creation *(prajāpatis)* and so on. Thus it is said, long ago the blessed Parameshṭhī Brahmā was seated on a couch of blooming lotus in his

celestial world, surrounded by the gods headed by Indra, discussing the highest philosophical truth and appreciating impeccable discussions of great knowledge. As the Adorable to the three worlds was thus seated, all the Prajāpatis or the masters of creation like Manu, Daksha, Chākshusha and others, all great *ṛishis* headed by the principal seven, attended on him, some of them, clever in hymnal prayers, repeated the *ṛiks*, others in worshipful mood repeated the text of the *yajus*, some sang the adorable hymns *sāma*, still others repeated the *mantras*, the hymns that reveal the intricacies of the sacrificial ritual:

एवमनुश्रूयते—पुरा किल भगवान् स्वं लोकमधितिष्ठन् परमेष्ठी विकसिनि पद्मविष्टरे समुपविष्टः शुनासीरप्रमुखैर्गीर्वाणैः परिवृतो ब्रह्मोद्याः कथाः कुर्वन्नन्यांश्च निरवद्यविद्यागोष्ठीर्विभावयन् कदाचिदासांचक्रे । तथासीनं च तं त्रिभुवनप्रतीक्ष्य सर्वे मनुदक्षचाक्षुषप्रभृतयः प्रजापतयः सर्वे च सप्तर्षिपुरःसरा महामुनयः सिषेविरे । केचिदृचः स्तुतिचतुराः समुदाचरन् केचिदपचितिभाञ्जि यजूंष्यपठन् । केचित्प्रशंसासामानि जगुः । अपरे विवृतक्रतुक्रियातन्त्रान् मन्त्रानाचचक्षिरे ।

Harshacharita 1. p. 12-13

The *ṛishis* themselves, according to the description given in the *Chitrasūtra*, are to be of the *Bhadra pramāṇa* or the measurement of the variety known as *Bhadra*, wearing *jaṭājūṭa* (Fig. 19), with their upper garments composed of *kṛishṇājina* or the deer skin (Fig. 20), physically weak but completely lustrous:

Fig. 19. *Jaṭājūṭa* of *ṛishi*, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

कार्या भद्रप्रमाणेन ब्राह्मणाश्च नरेश्वर ।
ऋषयस्तत्र कर्तव्या जटाजूटोपशोभिताः ॥
कृष्णाजिनोत्तरासंगा दुर्बलास्तेजसा युताः ।

Vishṇudharmottara 3, 42, 3-4.

Elsewhere in the same *Chitrasūtra*, sages and the manes (*ṛishis* and *pitṛis*) as well as the celestials are to be almost decorated by their own lustre blazing in their glory which completely undermines the luminosity of any other in its presence:

ऋषयः पितरश्चैव देवताश्च नराधिप ।
स्वप्रभाभरणाः कार्या द्युतिमन्तस्तथैव च ॥
मुष्णन्तस्तेजसां तेजः परेषां नृपसत्तम ।

Vishṇudharmottara 3, 37,16.

The best example of the *ṛishi*, weak in physical appearance but lustrous and compelling reverence, is seen in the seated one near the shrine of Vishṇu in the panel of Arjuna's penance at Mahābalipuram (Fig. 21). The *ṛishis* are seers in the sense that they have seen through divine vision the hymns of the *Vedas*: *ṛishayo mantradrashṭārah*. In one of the texts invoking peace (*śāntipāṭhas*), there is the adoration of speech as the highest embodiment of the infinite, of the *ṛishis* as its repositories. Salutation to speech, the uttered and unuttered, salutation again to that speech and to the lord of speech Vāchaspati (Bṛihaspati) — who, by the way — is himself an ideal of a *ṛishi*, salutation to the *ṛishis*, the composers of the Vedic *mantras* and the masters of *mantras*. Let me not be overlooked by the *ṛishis*, the makers of the Vedic *mantras* and their masters, nor I neglect them, the Vedic composers and masters of the *mantras*. May I adore that universal speech auspicious and beloved of the gods:

Fig. 20 Nara with Nārāyaṇa as *ṛishi* wearing *kṛishṇājina* upper garment, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Deogarh.

नमो वाचे याचोदिता या चानुदिता तस्यै वाचे नमो नमो वाचे
नमो वाचस्पतये नम ऋषिभ्यो मन्त्राकृद्भ्यो मन्त्रपतिभ्यो मा
मामृषयो मन्त्रकृतो मन्त्रपतयः परादुर्माऽहमृषीन् मन्त्रपतीन् परादाम्
वैश्वदेवी वाचमुद्यासं शिवामदस्तां जुष्टा देवेभ्यः ।

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 4,1,1.

That is why Kālidāsa loves often to refer to *ṛishis* of repute as *mantrakṛits*, the creators of Vedic hymns. When Raghu enquires of Kautsa of scintillating intellect, the disciple of *maharishi* Varatantu, he asks him whether his master, the foremost among the composers of the Vedic hymns was in fine state:

अप्यग्रणीर्मन्त्रकृतामृषीणां कुशाग्रनुद्धे कुशली गुरुस्ते ।

Raghuvaṁśa 5, 4.

Elsewhere when Dilīpa addresses Vaśishṭha, he describes his preceptor very reverentially as *mantrakṛit*. My foes completely vanquished even from afar by Vedic *mantras*, of which you are the composer, put to

shame my arrows however well aimed that can only strike the target before them:

तव मन्त्रकृतो मन्त्रैर्दूरात्प्रशमितारिभिः ।
प्रत्यादिश्यन्त इव मे दृष्टलक्ष्यभिदः शराः ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1, 61.

Vālmīki is also of the category of *mantrakṛits* effectively performing their ritual as in the case of Lava and Kuśa:

सखा दशरथस्यपि जनकस्य च मन्त्रकृत् ।
संचस्कारोभयप्रीत्या मैथिलेयौ यथाविधि ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 15, 31.

Fig. 21 Emaciated *ṛishi* in penance, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

In fact Kālidāsa almost creates a Vedic hymn through the mouth of Kaṇva, as a psalm of blessing when Śakuntalā goes to her husband's home.He asks the Vaitāna fires, with the sacrificial place of the altar well arranged, having *kuśa* grass spread all around the edges and provided with holy twigs, remove all sin and evil by the pleasing odour of the clarified butter (*havya*) offered to them to protect her :

अमी वेदिं परितः क्लृप्तधिष्ण्याः समिद्धन्तः प्रान्तसस्तीर्णदर्भाः ।
अपघ्नन्तो दुरितं हव्यगन्धैर्वैतानास्त्वां वह्नयः पावयन्तु ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,7.

This is not a regular Vedic hymn as such from any of the *Vedas*, but the firm faith of Kālidāsa in the tremendous potential in the creative speech of the highest order in the *ṛishis*, has made him almost create this as a hymn approaching in its grandeur the original Vedic hymns themselves.

The grandeur of the *ṛishis* is seen by the description given so graphically by Māgha in the picture of the descent of Nārada to meet Kṛishṇa in Dvārakā in his palace. As Kṛishṇa watched, he saw descending right from heaven the sage born of Hiraṇyagarbha himself:

ददर्शावतरन्तमम्बराद्धिरण्यगर्भाङ्गभुवं मुनिं हरिः ।

Śiśupālavadha 1, 1.

Nārada according to the tradition was born of Brahmā's lap:

उत्संगान्नारदो जज्ञे दक्षोंऽगुष्ठात् स्वयम्भुवः ।

Bhāgavata

The people looked on with wonder, as the rays of the sun move eastwards and the flames of the fire always blaze up, but this lustre that enveloped every side was coming down from high, what could it be was the wonder:

गतं तिरश्चीनमनूरुसारथेः प्रसिद्धमूर्ध्वज्वलनं हविर्भुजः ।
पतत्यधो धाम विसारि सर्वतः किमेतदित्याकुलमीक्षितं जनैः ॥

Śiśupālavadha 1, 2.

It was first thought to be a mass of illumination, slowly there was a form revealed in it, and the lord finally made out the form as human, which ultimately turned out to be Nārada himself as he understood it:

चगस्त्विषामित्यवधरितं पुरा ततः शरीरीति विभाविताकृतिम् ।
विभुर्विभक्तावयवं पुमानिति क्रमादमुं नारद इत्यबोधि सः ॥

Śiśupālavadha 1, 3.

In the context of his descent from the blue clouds, himself immaculately white like concentrated camphor dust, he looked like Śiva himself with the white ashes smeared on his body against the dark elephant hide as his backdrop:

नवानधोऽधो वृहतः पयोधरान् समूढकर्पूरपरागपाण्डुरम् ।
क्षणं क्षणोत्क्षिप्तगजेन्द्रकृत्तिना स्फुटोपमं भूतिसितेन शम्भुना ॥

Śiśupālavadha 1, 4.

Nārada looked again like the autumnal moon with his *jaṭās* golden like lotus filaments, like the golden creepers growing on the majestic snow-clad mountain:

दधानमम्भोरुहकेसरद्युतीर्जटाः शरच्चन्द्रमरीचिरोचिषम् ।
विपाकपिङ्गास्तुहिनस्थलीरुहो धराधरेन्द्रं व्रततीततीरिव ॥

Śiśupālavadha 1, 5.

With a brownish waist band of *muñja* grass on a white body of the tint of the Arjuna tree, wearing an upper garment of jet dark deer skin, he seemd to emulate the fair form of Balarāma, with the lower garment of dark bluish silk and golden waist zone:

पिशङ्गमौञ्जीयुजमर्जुनच्छविं वसानमेणाजिनमंजनद्युति ।
सुवर्णसूत्राकलिताधराम्बरं विडम्बयन्तं शितिवाससस्तनुम् ॥

Śiśupālavadha 1, 6.

He looked also like the white autumnal cloud completely snowwhite, with lightning streaks on it, wearing as he did the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) composed of threads of golden creepers, lengthy like the golden feathers of the lord of birds, Garuḍa:

विहङ्गराजाङ्गरुहैरिवायतैर्हिरण्मयोर्वीरुहवल्लितन्तुभिः ।
कृतोपवीतं हिमशुभ्रमुच्चकैर्घनं घनान्ते तडिता गुणैरिव ॥

Śiśupālavadha 1, 7.

This gives an idea of the sublimity to which the *ṛishis* could go. Nārada is introduced by Bhāsa as the most famous in the three worlds, usually sojourning in heaven, and frequently moving out

from his main place of Brahmaloka, his paternal home, to create quarrels on earth, quarrels intended not for disaster but for the good of the world, as sometimes even misunderstanding helps the best of understanding and all is well that ends well, as Nārada is capable of ending things exceedingly well:

अह गगनसचारी त्रिपु लोकेपु विश्रुत: ।
ब्रह्मलोकादिह प्राप्तो नारद: कलहप्रिय: ॥

Bālacharita 1

Nārada is the foremost of the category of *devaṛishis* or celestial sages. A Chola sculpture from the temple of Naṭarāja at Chidambaram gives us a glimpse of Nārada with the lute that is ever in his hand to offer musical prayer (Fig. 22).

There are categories of sages, *ṛishis*, *brahmaṛishis*, *rājaṛishis*, *mahaṛishis* and *devaṛishis*. The grandeur of Nārada described by Māgha would give an idea of a *devaṛishi*. Among the *maharishis*, Vyāsa Bādarāyana, Krishṇadvaipāyana as he is also called, is considered no less than Vishṇu himself. In fact, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, in the *vibhūti adhyāya*, just as the lord mentions he is Nārada among *devaṛishis*, *devaṛishīṇàm cha nāradah*, he is Vyāsa among the *munis*, मुनीनामप्यह व्यास: कवीनामुशना कवि , he is also Kavi or Śukra among the learned ones. Other well-known *devaṛishis* are Tumburu, Bharata, Parvata and Devala. Among the Siddhas, another category of *ṛishis*, he is Kapila: सिद्धाना कपिलो मुनि and he is Brihaspati, also a sage, among the highest priests:

पुरोधसा च मुख्य मा विद्धि पार्थ बृहस्पतिम् ।

Bhagavadgītā 10, 24.

The glory of Vyāsa is that according to the well known maxim he is Brahmā without the four faces, Vishṇu without the additional pair of arms and Śiva just devoid of the third eye in the forehead.

अचतुर्वदनो ब्रह्मा द्विबाहुरपरो हरि: ।
अफाललोचन: शम्भुर्भगवान् बादरायण: ॥

His description has been given in the *Mahābhārata* almost at the commencement, as a word picture. He is dark like the laden cloud with his brown *jaṭās* tied up, tall, staff in hand, wearing the skin of the black buck as his upper garment, foremost among seers, purifying

by his look all the worlds, the son of Parāśara, revealing himself in each one of the eighteen divisions of the *Mahābhārata*:

अभ्रश्यामः पिंगजटाबद्धकलापः प्रांशुर्दण्डी कृष्णमृगत्वग्परिधानः ।
साक्षाल्लोकान् पावयमानः कविमुख्यः पाराशर्यः पर्वसु रूपं विदधातु ॥

This verse in the southern recension of the *Mahābhārata* has very early in the Christian era travelled abroad and is found in the Balinese text edited by Professor Sylvain Levi. The description of both Vyāsa and Vālmīki as two outstanding *ṛishis* has been given in the *Vishṇudharmottara*. In the *Vishṇudharmottara* Vyāsa is described as 'dark-hued, of emaciated form, tawny in his tied up locks of hair and attended by his four disciples Sumantu, Jaimini, Paila and Vaiśampāyana:

कृष्णः कृशतनुर्व्यासः पिंगलातिजटाधरः ।
सुमन्तुर्जैमिनिः पैलो वैशंयायन एव च ॥
तस्य शिष्यास्तु कर्तव्याश्चत्वारः परिपार्श्वयोः ॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3, 85, 65-66

Śaṅkara himself quotes from the *Vishṇupurāṇa* to give the glory of Vyāsa identified with Vishṇu. Who else except Kṛishṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa who is no other than the lord Nārāyaṇa with charming lily-white eyes could accomplish the writing of an epic like the *Mahābhārata*:

कृष्णद्वैपायनं व्यासं विद्धि नारायणं प्रभुन् ।
को ह्यन्यः पुण्डरीकाक्षान्महाभारतकृद्भवेत् ॥

Vishṇupurāṇa 3, 4,5.

It is indeed a great good fortune that there is the portrait of Vyāsa not only with his four disciples but also with Śaṅkara as a young boy of supreme intellect seated close to the sage in panels flanking the supreme teacher Dakshiṇāmūrti in a carving in a Pallava temple of the 8th century at Kāñchīpuram (Fig. 23)

As Māgha has described Nārada, Bhāravi has given a vivid pen picture of the form of Vyāsa, who approaches suddenly Yudhishṭhira in distress, exiled to live in sylvan surroundings in Dvaitavana. Even as Yudhishṭhira was counselling the greatly agitated Bhīma on the right course of action, there came on the scene Vyāsa, the son of

Parāśara, as if it was the realisation of the very fruit that was desired by the Pāṇḍavas:

अनुशासतमित्यनाकुलं नयवर्त्मांकुलमर्जुनाग्रजम् ।
स्वयमर्थ इवाभिवाञ्छितस्तमभीयाय पराशरात्मजः ॥

Kirātārjunīya 2, 54.

With his sweet looks conveying the lesson of peace and tranquillity to even the unruly animals and shining bright with a blaze that could burn all sins, and yet so beautiful to behold:

मधुरैरवशानि लम्भयन्नपि तिर्यञ्चि समं निरीक्षितैः ।
परितः पटु विभ्रदेनसां दहनं धाम विलोकनक्षमम् ॥

Kirātārjunīya 2, 55.

Approaching suddenly that source of penance, remote from all evil, the sage appeared like a huge heap of merit in bodily form, as the king viewed him with wonder:

सहसोपगतः सविस्मयं तपसां सूतिरसूतिरापदाम् ।
ददृशे जगतीभुजा मुनिः स वपुष्मानिव पुण्यसंचयः ॥

Kirātārjunīya, 2, 56.

Lustrous with scintillating rays spreading all around, looked the very picture of Jupiter in the presence of the moon and looked as beautiful:

तन्वन्तमिद्धमभितो गुरुमंशुजालं लक्ष्मीमुवाह सकलस्य शशाङ्कमूर्तेः ।

Kirātārjunīya 2, 59

The importance of Vyāsa is such that at the commencement of the *Veṇīsaṁhāra* in one of the early verses, the Sūtradhāra, though it is almost unnecessary to bring in Vyāsa, has specially recorded his salutations to Kṛishṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa, whom he describes as though dark, he is tainted neither red by attachment to cravings nor dark by evil, being free from both and ethically immaculate, and an ocean that produced the nectar called *Bhārata*, which has to be drunk not by the mouth but through the ears:

श्रवणाञ्जलिपुटपेयं विरचितवान् भारतख्यममृतं यः ।
तमहमरागमकृष्णं कृष्णद्वैपायनं वन्दे ॥

Veṇīsaṁhāra 1, 4.

This gives the form as well as the great poetic creation of Vyāsa, which Śaṅkara has already affirmed with wonder as possible only from this sage that was no other than Vishṇu himself in another form. Bāṇa compares him to Brahmā himself, a veritable Brahmā among poets, whose knowledge is unsurpassed being of the nature of omniscience, and who could, by a shower of noble speech (Sarasvatī) create the sacred epic *Bhārata* like the subcontinent of Bhārata with the river Sarasvatī as its holy landmark:

नमः सर्वविदे तस्मै व्यासाय कविवेधसे ।
चक्रे पुण्यं सरस्वत्या यो वर्षमिव भारतम् ॥

Harshacharita 1, 4.

The Kāshmīri Kshemendra, one of the greatest medieval poets, a prodigious writer with such major works like the *Rāmāyaṇamañjarī*, *Bhāratamañjarṭ*, *Bṛihatkathāmañjarī* and *Avadānakalpalatā*, in addition to his several delightful little skits, sonnets, poems, gnomic, didactic, satiric, that inspire, amuse and delight, that proclaims himself with an additional title *Vyāsadāsa*, has towards the end of his *Bhāratamañjarī*, paid a magnificent tribute to the form and composition of Vyāsa in a string of verses. He describes this as the form of Vyāsa as he saw in a dream where he was directed by him to write this noble work. Salutation to Krishṇadvaipāyana, the sage dark in hue, but immaculate white in lustre, who bears a collection of tawny locks *(jaṭās)* like the surging flames of fire of supreme knowledge. Salutation to the one whose face shines with a light like the bright pollen of the goddess of speech ever in his mouth lit up in mottled colours by the hue of his shining beard and moustaches. Salutation to the one whose eyes appear like lamps dipelling the darkness of the three worlds by his drinking up and offering the light of the sun even as he sets at twilight. Salutation to the huge tree of the garden of *dharma* with a thousand boughs, flowers establishing ethical principles and shining bright with fruit assuring bliss. Salutation to the one who dwells in the heavenly garden of discrimination wearing the dark antelope skin, that suggests him as it were by its white and dark hue as swarmed by dark black honey bees in their fasination for the fragrance of the highest merit he represents. Salutation to the one adorned by the sacred thread looking white like the lunar streak like Brahmā of lotus-abode pervaded by the white hue of the swan. Salu-

tation to the full moon from the ocean of all sciences and literature filled to the brim by the several streams of a variety of knowledge, the essence of ambrosial liquid and the progenitor of all poetic activity. Salutation to the abode of truth who shines by his own lustre, the abode of penance, the remover of the fatigue of cycles of births and deaths, to the great sage Vyāsa, salutation. Kshemendra calls it *Vyāsāshṭakastotra*, a hymn composed of eight verses in adoration of Vyāsa;

नमो ज्ञानानलशिखापुञ्जपिङ्गजटाभृते ।
कृष्णाय कृष्णमहसे कृष्णद्वैपायनाय ते ॥
नमस्तेजोमयश्मश्रुप्रभाशवलितत्विषे ।
वक्त्रवागीश्वरीपद्मरजसेवोदितश्रिये ॥
नमः सन्ध्यासमाधाननिष्पीतरविते जसे ।
त्रैलोक्यतिमिरोच्छेददीपप्रतिमचक्षुषे ॥
नमः सहस्रशाखाय धर्मोपवनशखिने ।
सत्त्वप्रतिष्ठपुष्पाय निर्वाणफलशालिने ॥
नमः कृष्णाजिनजुषे बोधनन्दनवासिने ।
व्याप्तायेवालिजालेन पुण्यसौरभलिप्सया ॥
नमः शशिकलाकारब्रह्ममूत्रांशुशोभिने ।
श्रिनाय हसकान्त्येव संपर्कात्किमलौकसः ॥
नमो विद्यानदीपूर्णशास्त्राब्धिसकलेन्दवे ।
पीयूषरससाराय कविव्यापारवेधसे ॥
नमः सत्यनिवासाय स्वविकाशविलासिने ।
व्यासाय धाम्ने तपसां संसारायासहारिणे ॥

Bhāratamañjarī p. 850.851, 13-20.

It is no wonder therefore that Vyāsa is shown with his disciples seated on either side of the lord of all learning, Śiva as Dakshiṇāmūrti, in the central main niche of a Pallava temple Airāvaṇeśvara in Kāñchīpuram, with Śaṅkara as a little boy whom he encouraged to write his first *bhāshya* on the *Vishṇusahasranāma*, one of the most important portions of the *Mahābhārata* as a maiden attempt at writing learned commentaries on other larger texts.

Vālmīki similarly is described as fair in complexion, almost overpowering sight by his huge bundled up *jaṭās*, ever lost in penance, the very picture of patience and peace, emaciated in form, but lustrous:

गौरस्तु कार्यो वाल्मीकिर्जटामण्डलदुर्दृशः ।
तपस्यभिरतः शान्तो न कृशो न च पीवरः ॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3, 85, 64.

Though unfortunately there is no sculpture of Vālmīki in India there is a temple for him in a far off village Tra Kieu in Annam and equated with Simhapura, the ancient capital of Champā. This is again an early tradition, a tradition following the dictum of this text which is again thus proven to be far anterior to the eighth century.

Kālidāsa cannot but recall the surge of compassion in this sage's heart, whose grief at the death of the Krauñcha bird at the hands of a cruel hunter that shot one of the loving pair spurt into poetry (Fig. 24):

तामभ्यगच्छद्रुदितानुसारी कविः कुशेध्माहरणाय यातः ।
निषादविद्धाण्डजदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 14, 70

and enabled him to create a poetic panacea for all the ills of the world, to alleviate human misery by indicating the ethical way of life, that has built up the character of every Indian from his childhood by constant thought on the noble qualities of Rāma.

Bhavabhūti equally pays a tribute to Vālmīki. Vālmīki is not only a great sage but is the forerunner of all poets that composed the life history of the lord of Raghus ever so purifying, and my utterances, as an ardent devotee of that sage have followed suit: may the fortunate ones with mind ever so pleasant listen:

प्राचेतसो मुनिवृषा प्रथमः कवीनां यत्पावनं रघुपतेः प्रणिनाय वृत्तम् ।
भक्तस्य तत्र समरंसत मेऽपि वाचस्तत् सुप्रसन्नमनसः कृतिनो भजन्तु ॥

Mahāvīracharita 1, 7.

The description of the form of Kaśyapa in rigorous penance is an even more awe-inspiring pen picture. Being in such deep meditation, he is oblivious of the surroundings and is unaware of the state of his body itself, overgrown with earth and vegetation, scorched by heat and become a habitat of birds and reptiles. This great sage, situated facing the solar orb, is unquiveringly firm like a post, his

body half-buried in an anthill, the chest with dried up reptile slough fast stuck on it, the neck almost choked by coils of several dried creepers, and with a large bundle of matted hair sprawling the entire expanse of the shoulders interspersed by the nests of birds built on them:

वल्मीकार्धनिमग्नमूर्तिरुरसा सदष्टसर्पत्वचा
कण्ठे जीर्णलताप्रतानवलये नात्यर्थसंपीडितः ।
अंसव्यापि शकुन्तनीडनिचयं विभ्रज्जटामण्डलं
यत्र स्थाणुरिवाचलो मुनिरसावभ्यर्कबिम्बं स्थितः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7, 11

This naturally creates amazement in Dushyanta who sees a whole troop of sages engaged in such severe penance in such a pleasant and dazzling celestial atmosphere of prosperity and delight, caring little for such ephemeral pleasures. These sages are performing severe penance in a spirit of renouncement, in the very place where there are those very objects for obtaining which others practice asceticism, choosing to sustain themselves on just air as food though in a forest of Kalpa trees that offer dainties according to ones desire, bathing and performing religious ablutions in water of pinkish hue by the pollen of golden lotuses growing in them, lost in meditation seated on slabs of precious rocky gems, in complete self control in the very presence of celestial nymphs that here abound:

प्राणानामनिलेन वृत्तिरुचिता सत्कल्पवृक्षे वने
तोये काञ्चनपद्मरेणुकपिशे घर्माभिषेकक्रिया ।
ध्यानं रत्नशिलातलेषु विबुधस्त्रीसंनिधौ संयमो
यत्काङ्क्षन्ति तपोभिरन्यमुनयस्तस्मिँस्तपस्यन्त्यमी ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7, 12.

The description of Agastya in his *āśrama*, surrouned by so many other distinguished sages, himself the most conspicious among them all, is clearly given by Vālmīki, when a disciple of his announces the arrival of Rāma to him. Agastya is described as unassailable by his penance, being the foremost of the sages:

स प्रविश्य मुनिश्रेष्ठं तपसा दुष्प्रधर्षणम् ।

Rāmāyaṇa 3, 12, 6

and when Rāma enters with his wife and brother, Sītā and Laksh-

maṇa, he remarks to his brother, 'Look Lakshmaṇa! Here the revered sage Agastya is coming to welcome us! By his extraordinary noble bearing, I am able to place him among these noble sages:'

एष लक्ष्मण निष्क्रामत्यगस्त्यो भगवान् ऋषिः ।
औदार्येणावगच्छामि निधनं तपसामिमम् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 3, 12, 23.

Agastya (Fig. 25) is so great that Kālidāsa waxes eloquent in describing the potential of his great asceticism. In the context of the Pāṇḍya prince as one of the suitors in the *svayaṁvara* of princess Indumatī, Sunandā describes how Agastya's graciousness marks the prosperity of the Pāṇḍya monarch, Agastya who stopped the growth of the monumental mountain Vindhya, who drank up without a drop of remainder and poured forth again the waters of the mighty ocean, and who affectionately approached the monarch after the bath completing every horse sacrifice he performed to enquire whether the ceremonies had gone off very well and he had had a happy concluding bath:

विन्ध्यस्य संस्तम्भयिता महाद्रेर्निःशेषपीतोज्झितसिंधुराजः ।
प्रीत्याश्वमेधावभृतार्द्रमूर्तेः सौस्नातिको यस्य भवत्यगस्त्यः ॥

Raghunaṁśa 6, 61.

Again, in the context of Rāma's return to Ayodhyā in the aerial car, as he approached the abode of Agastya down below and as he saw it, Kālidāsa makes him point it to Sītā, and with great reverence tell her that this was the chosen spot of that great sage, who by a mere knit of his brow could fall Nahusha from his high position of Indra, who was the cause of the purification of the utmost turbidity in waters, and having smelt the smoke of the three fires from the hermitage of this impeccably famous great sage filled with the fragrance of the clarified butter that filled the entire path of the heavenly course of the aerial car and thereby with his mind free from all morbidity enjoyed a lightness of ethical spirit:

भ्रूभेदमात्रेण पदान्मघोनः प्रभ्रंशया यो नहुषं चकार ।
तस्याविलाम्भःपरिशुद्धिहेतोर्भौमो मुनेः स्थानपरिग्रहोऽयम् ॥
त्रेताग्निधूमाग्रमनिन्द्यकीर्तेस्तस्येदमाक्रान्तविमानमार्गम् ।
घ्रात्वा हविर्गन्धि रजोविमुक्तः समश्नुते मे लघिमानमात्मा ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13, 36-37.

In this same context Bhavabhūti describes Rāma in the aerial car pointing to Sītā the hermitage of Agastya, recalling him and his great exploits, the ocean seen down below not far away that was reduced to a desert of sand by his single sip, the Vindhya mountain further up whose expansion was equally stopped abruptly, and the dreaded demon Vātāpī's body roasted and digested in the abdominal fire of the sage who could not be a theme for description, his impossible exploits defying all narration:

अयं वारा राशिः किल मरुरभूद्यद्विलसितै-
रयं विन्ध्यो येनाहृतविहृतिराध्मानमजहात् ।
विलिल्ये यत्कुक्षिस्थितशिखिनि वातपिवपुषा
स कासां वाणीनां मुनिरकलितात्मासु विषयः ॥

Mahāvīracharitā 7, 14

Bāṇa waxes still more eloquent in a magnificent description of Agastya in the context of his hermitage on the banks of the running stream of the Godāvarī with the verdure all around rendered parrot-green by luxurious plantain growth and shade everywhere, the stream itself appearing as if anxiously running towards the river drunk by the pitcher-born sage Agastya, famous in all the worlds; the very place of the origin of revered *dharma* itself, who, on the appeal of the gods, drank up the entire expanse of water of the ocean; whose command to stop growing could not be transgressed even by the mighty Vindhya mountain, that out of competition with the noble mountain Meru, spread out his magnificant peaks heavenward in space in an attempt to obstruct the path of the solar chariot on its march, defying the arguments of all the celestials; who had digested in his abdominal fire the dreaded demon Vātāpī; particles of dust on whose feet were kissed by the tips of the *makara* decoration on the crowns of the celestials and the demons; associated particularly with the southern quarter: who had by a single fiery sound in anger thrown out from the fair territory of heaven the blazing glory of Nahusha himself: the adorable sage of immense potential:

तस्यां च दण्डकारण्याण्तःपाति, सकलभुवनविख्यातं, उत्पत्तिक्षेत्रमिव भगवतो धर्मस्य, सुरपतिप्रार्थनापीतसकलसागरजलस्य, मेरुमत्सरादुग्गनतलप्रसारितविकटशिरःसहस्रेण दिवसकररथगमनपथमपनेतुमभ्युद्यतेनावगणितसकलसुरवचसा विन्ध्यगिरिणाप्यनुल्लङ्घिता-

ज्ञस्य, जठरानलजीर्णवातापिदानवस्य, सुरासुरमुकुटमकरपत्रकोटि-
चुम्बितचरणरजसो दक्षिणामुखविशेषकस्य, सुरलोकादेकहुंकार
निपातितनहुषप्रकटप्रभावस्य भगवतो महामुनेरगस्त्यस्य.....
दिशि दिशि शुकहरितैश्च कदलीवनैः श्यामलीकृतपरिसरं सरिता च
कलशयोनिपरिपीतसागरमार्गानुगतयेव वद्धवेणिकया गोदावर्या
परिगताश्रमपदमासीत ।

Kādambarī 1, pp-41-42.

The greatness of Agastya is all the more by the fact that the lord who came on earth, Rāma, the finale of the glory of the prosperity of the ten-headed monster Rāvaṇa, following with deep respect the way of the great sage Agastya, whom he revered ever so much, lived happily along with his wife Sītā for a while in his vicinity in Pañchavaṭī, in a beautiful hermitage built by Lakshmaṇa, Rāma who had abandoned an empire to protect the word of his father Daśaratha:

यत्र च दशरथवचनमनुपालयन्नुत्सृष्टराज्यो दशवदनलक्ष्मीविभ्रम-
विरामो रामो महामुनिमगस्त्यमनुचरन् सह सीतया लक्ष्मणो-
परचितरुचिरपर्णशालः पञ्चवट्यां कंचित्कालं सुखमुवास ।

Kādambarī 1, p. 43.

Under *Asambhava*, the figure of speech 'impossible', Appayya Dīkshita gives a verse as example, which vividly describes the amazing power of sage Agastya that could accomplish the least expected 'impossible'. Counting on this as the one store of water and the receptable of all the gems, the occan has been sought by us, with our minds thumping with a thirst of desire; who could know this that a sage would, in a second, sip this up with all its teeming whales and crocodiles in a single gulp from the hollow of his palm:

अयं वारामेको निलय इति रत्नाकर इति
श्रितोऽस्माभिस्तृष्णातरलितमनोभिर्जलनिधिः ।
क एवं जानीते निजकरपुटीकोटरगतं
क्षणादेनं ताभ्यत्तिमिमकरमापास्यति मुनिः ॥

Kuvalayānanda 83, p. 109.

Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita, in describing the Dakshiṇāmūrti form of Śiva as the *paramaguru* (Master at source) of innumerable sages of eminence, specially refers to the preeminence of Agastya, who is just one of the many such (Fig. 26), Agastya, who by a single gulp swallowed the ocean; the abode of Vishṇu himself, whose navel bore

the lotus from which was born Brahmā who created the entire universe:

यः स्रष्टा जगतां यतोऽयमभवत्तद्यस्य नाभेरभू-
च्छेते यत्र स तं च यश्चुलुकयांचक्रे सहान्यैः क्षणात् ।
तादृक्षाः शतशः पुराणमुनयो यच्छिष्यवर्गे स्थिताः
स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नाऽपि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 23.

The commentator on this verse Sivānandatīrtha quotes from the *Skāndapurāṇa* describing the intense devotion to Śiva of Agastya, whose very command, made after smearing himself with the sacred ashes *(vibhūti)*, symbol of Śiva's ascetic powers, brought the entire ocean as if it were just a dew drop into the hollow of his palm, even as he contemplated on Śiva:

समुद्रतीरमासाद्य भस्मादायभिमंत्रितम् ।
धृत्वा ललाटकरयोरालोड्य सहसा ऋषिः ॥
आजुहावांबुधिं पाणि प्रसार्य स महामुनिः ।
तदानीं चागतं चाब्धिं करे नीहरबिंदुवत् ॥
प्राशयामास तं ध्यात्वा महादेवं ऋषीश्वरः ।

Skāndamahāpurāṇa, upadeśakāṇḍa 12, 45-48

This supreme power that he derives from Śiva makes him comparable almost to the Supreme One that determines every happening in this world and is styled fate or providence.

Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita hence styles him the destiny of the ocean that could be so sipped up. Who can dare to comprehend the sporting spirit of almighty Fate, if first into the hollow of the palm and then into the sage himself went the vast expanse of the waters of the ocean, whose son is the king of the entire world of Brāhmaṇas, and who is the abode of Hari, whose lotus feet are the refuge of the universe:

राजा विप्रकुलस्य यस्य तनयः सोमः स वारां निधि-
र्यः सर्वाश्रयणीयपादकमलस्तस्याश्रयोऽयं हरेः ।
आनीतश्चुलुकं स एव चुलकेऽप्यन्तः प्रवेश्येत चेत्
कः संवेदितुमीहते भगवतः कालस्य लीलायितम् ॥

Anyāpadeśaśataka 54.

Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita so amazed at the sipping of the ocean by

Agastya, could yet think of almost similar exploits in two other sages of tremendous potential. He thinks of the one who could create a new heaven and a fresh Indra as its overlord, and mightier still a sage who could just make his rod gulp up a myriad missiles aimed at him without the least effort to stop them by himself, and finally philosophises whether they could have any peers. He wonders whether any more would be born like them among the legions of celestials or the highest of the Brāhmaṇas with knowledge of the Supreme One to peer with the one who sipped up the entire mass of oceanic water, or who created a veritable rival to heaven, or who by a single staff of his engulfed all the powerful missiles and arrows aimed at him:

येनाचान्तः सलिलनिचयो येन सृष्टा प्रतिद्यौः
शस्त्राण्यस्त्रण्यपि कवलितान्येकया यस्य यष्ट्या ।
कस्तादृक्षः प्रभवतु जनो देवभूदेववर्गे
कालः कीटानिव कक्लयामास तानप्ययत्नम् ॥

Śāntivilāsa 37.

Agastya, Viśvāmitra and Vaśishṭha are thereby glorified.

The story narrates how Viśvāmitra, who had promised Triśaṅku entry into heaven, finding Indra dropping him out, enraged, created by the power of his own penance, a rival heaven adjacent to heaven itself, with him to rule as its overlord. Thrown out of heaven by Indra, as unfit to be there cursed by his own preceptor, he fell head downwards crying for help to Viśvāmitra, the treasure-house of penance; hearing his wail, Kauśika, roused to mighty rage, cried 'halt and stay' and himself looking almost a new creator shining beyond all among the sages assembled, started creating another set of seven sages in the southerly direction, a whole garland of stars and constellations and, beside himself with rage, he pronounced that he would create another Indra or the world could go without Indra if necessary, and earnestly he began fashioning so many celestials; and now, greatly agitated, the host of seven *ṛishis*, the celestials and the demons spoke sweet coaxing words to the mighty Viśvāmitra gently pointing out that Triśanku cursed by his preceptor could not really go with his own impure body to heaven; realising the verity in their word, the great sage explained to the sages and celestials how he could not go back on his word even

hana and from every hair root of that great *ṛishi* Vaśishṭha sparked forth blazes of fire raising smoke. The *brahmadaṇḍa* staff itself burst into flames like Kālāgni smoking or another club of Yama, when all the sages extolled Vaśishṭha, the greatest of them all, unassailable in his Brāhmanical glory. Oh lord! control by your own lustre! You have surely put down the mighty Viśvāmitra. Please be gracious. Oh greatest among sages! may the worlds get over their fears! So beseeched, the great sage came back to his peaceful position. Also defeated, Viśvāmitra said with a deep sigh 'Fie on the strength of the Kshatriya, the strength of the lustre of Brāhma is the strength; by the single *brahmadaṇḍa* all my missiles have been put down. Having observed all this, with my mind now tranquil, I have resolved to attain by great penance that which would give me the Brāhma strength:

इत्युक्त्वा परमक्रुद्धो दण्डमुद्यम्य सत्वर: ।
विधूममिव कालाग्निं यमदण्डमिवापरम् ॥
एवमुक्तो वशिष्ठेन विश्वामित्रो महाबल: ।
आग्नेयमस्त्रमुत्क्षिप्य तिष्ठ तिष्ठेति चाब्रवीत् ॥
ब्रह्मदण्डं समुत्क्षिप्य कालदण्डमिवापरम् ।
वशिष्ठो भगवान् क्रोधादिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ॥
क्षत्रबन्धो स्थितोस्म्येष यद्बलं तद्विदर्शय ।
नाशयाम्येष ते दर्पं शस्त्रस्य तव गाधिज ॥
क्व च ते क्षत्रियबलं क्व च ब्राह्मबलं महत् ।
पश्य ब्रह्मबलं दिव्यं मम क्षत्रियपांसन ॥
तस्यास्त्रं गाधिपुत्रस्य घोरमाग्नेयमुद्यतम् ।
ब्रह्मदण्डेन तच्छान्तमग्नेर्वेग इवाम्भसा ॥
वारुणं चैव रौद्रं च ऐन्द्रं पाशुपतं तथा ।
ऐषीकं चापि चिक्षेप कुपितो गाधिनन्दन: ॥
मानवं मोहनं चैव गान्धर्वं स्वापनं तथा ।
जृम्भणं मादनं चैव संतापनविलापने ॥
शोषणं दारणं चैव वज्रमस्त्रं सुदुर्जयम् ।
ब्रह्मपाशं कालपाशं वारुणं पाशमेव च ॥
पैनाकास्त्रं च दयितं शुष्कार्द्रे अशनी उभे ।
दण्डास्त्रमथ पैशाचं क्रौञ्चमस्त्रं तथैव च ॥
धर्मचक्रं कालचक्रं विष्णुचक्रं तथैव च ।
वायव्यं मायनं चैव अस्त्रं हयशिरस्तथा ।
शक्तिद्वयं च चिक्षेप कंकालं मुसलं तथा ।
वैद्याधरं महास्त्रं च कालास्त्रमथ दारुणम् ॥

त्रिशूलमस्त्रं घोरं च कपालमथ कंकणम् ।
एतान्यस्त्राणि चिक्षेप सर्वाणि रघुनन्दन ॥
वशिष्ठे जपतां श्रेष्ठे तदद्भुतमिवाभवत् ।
तानि सर्वाणि दण्डेन ग्रसते ब्रह्मण: सुत: ॥
तेषु शान्तेषु ब्रह्मास्त्रं क्षिप्तवान् गाधिनन्दन: ।
तदस्त्रमुद्यतं दृष्ट्वा देवा: साग्निपुरोगमा: ॥
देवर्षयश्च संभ्रान्ता गन्धर्वा: समहोरगा: ।
त्रैलोक्यमासीत्संत्रस्तं ब्रह्मास्त्रे समुदीरिते ॥
तदप्यस्त्रं महाघोरं ब्राह्मं ब्राह्मेण तेजसा ।
वशिष्ठो ग्रसते सर्वं ब्रह्मदण्डेन राघव ॥
ब्रह्मास्त्रं ग्रसमानस्य वासिष्ठस्य महात्मन: ।
त्रैलोक्यमोहनं रौद्रं रूपमासीत्सुदारुणम् ॥
रोमकूपेषु सर्वेषु वशिष्ठस्य महात्मन: ।
मरीच्य इव निष्पेतुरग्नेर्धूमाकुलार्चिष: ॥
प्रज्वलद्ब्रह्मदण्डश्च वशिष्ठस्य करोद्यत: ।
विधूम इव कालाग्निर्यमदण्ड इवापर: ॥
ततोऽस्तुवन्मुनिगणा वशिष्ठं जपतां वरम् ।
अमेयं ते बलं ब्रह्मन्स्तेजो धारय तेजसा ॥
निगृहीतस्त्वया ब्रह्मन् विश्वामित्रो महाबल: ।
प्रसीद जपतां श्रेष्ठ लोका: सन्तु गतव्यथा: ॥
एवमुक्तो महातेजा: शमं चक्रे महातपा: ।
विश्वामित्रोऽपि निकृतो विनिश्वस्येदमब्रवीत् ॥
धिग्बलं क्षत्रियबलं ब्रह्मतेजोबलं बलम् ।
एकेन ब्रह्मदण्डेन सर्वास्त्राणि हतानि मे ॥
तदेतत्समवेक्ष्याहं प्रसन्नेन्द्रियमानस: ।
तपो महत् समास्थास्ये यद्धि ब्रह्मत्वकारणम् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1, 56, 1-24.

It is this Vaśishṭha, the preceptor of the Ikshvāku rulers that not only with Vāmadeva coronated Rāma, but also listened to his learned discourse on the highest Truth of the Eternal One (Fig. 28)

There is another in the same category of sages that performed the impossible and that was the royal sage Jahnu issuing from whose ear the celestial river Gaṅgā herself got the name 'daughter of Jahnu'. Kālidāsa never tires of calling the river Jahnukanyā, the daughter of Jahnu:

तीर्थे तोयव्यतिकरभुवे जह्नुकन्यासरय्वो:

Raghuvaṁśa 8, 95.

Fig. 28. Vaśishṭha and Vāmadera listening to the discourse of Rāma, Marāṭha school, Tañjāvur, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

जह्नोः कन्यां सगरतनयस्वर्गसोपानपङ्क्तिम् ।

Meghadūta 1, 53

Gaṅgā could be the celestial river that sprang from the holy water vessel (*kamaṇḍalu*) of Bramā, sallied forth from the foot of Vishṇu himself as Vishṇupadī, may have descended on the *jaṭās* of Śiva and become even his consort to the great chagrin of Pārvatī herself, she may have got her own sister Parvatarājakanyakā Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya, as her cowife, herself starting from the peak of the Himālaya to flow downwards; yet, when she roused the ire of Jahnu, absorbed in sacrificial activity as a *yajamāna*, she was sipped up in a trice (Fig. 29), Gaṅgā, who could fill the ocean over again when Agastya had sipped it up dry, and it is only on the entreaties of Bhagīratha and the Devas that Jahnu graciously released her through his ears, Gaṅgā receiving the appellation Jāhnavī, daughter of Jahnu (Fig. 30). Filled with wonder, the celestials from their aerial cars in high, viewed amazed the stream of Gaṅgā flowing after Bhagīratha, led to the place where his ancestors lay as ashes in the nether world, to be purified by this holy stream, the holiest of waters, the noblest of the streams, the destroyer of all sins of whatever magnitude, and thus flowed the river Gaṅgā and went in the direction that Bhagīratha led. On the way where Jahnu the sacrificer was engaged in an amazing sacrifice, Gaṅgā flooded the sacrificial hall and its adjuncts. The great one engaged in sacrifice understood her pride, and wonderfully enough drank up completely the water of the Gaṇges. At this the celestials, Gandharvas, *ṛishis*, all wonder-struck, adored the great Jahnu, the noblest of the noble, beseeched him that Gaṅgā should henceforth be his daughter, and be revived. The lustrous royal sage was pleased and released Gaṅgā through his ears. Hence Gaṅgā is called the daughter of Jahnu or Jāhnavī. She now resumed her course following Bhagīratha to purify his ancestors:

यतो भगीरथो राजा ततो गङ्गा यशस्विनी ।
जगाम सरितां श्रेष्ठा सर्वपापप्रणाशिनी ॥
ततो हि यजमानस्य जह्नोरद्भुतकर्मणः ।
गङ्गा संप्लावयामास यज्ञवाटे महात्मनः ॥
तस्यावलेपनं ज्ञात्वा क्रुद्धो यज्वा तु राघव ।
अपिबच्च जलं सर्वं गङ्गायाः परमाद्भुतम् ॥

ततो देवाः सगन्धर्वा ऋषयश्च सुविस्मिताः ।
पूजयन्ति महात्मानं जह्नुं परुषसत्तमम् ॥
गङ्गा चानुनयन्ति स्म दुहितृत्वे महात्मनः ।
ततस्तुष्टो महातेजाः श्रोत्राभ्यामसृजत्पुनः ॥
तस्माज्जह्नुसुता गङ्गा प्रोच्यते जाह्नवीति च ।
जगाम च पुनर्गङ्गा भगीरथरथानुगा ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1, 43, 35-40.

The glory of Viśvāmitra is given by Bhavabhūti in the *Mahāvīracharita* describing the sage Kauśika as the most revered *bhagavān* (even like *bhagavān* Vaśishṭha), the disciple of sage Kriśāśva. He is all victorious, and his great good fortune is further indicated by the glory of Rāma, no other than Vishṇu incarnate, the conqueror of the victor over the whole Kshatriya race, Paraśurāma, and whose main purpose in life was to remove the fears of others by being the refuge of the entire world; the moon of the family of the sun, and through him to *dharma* of Kshatra itself was all victorious in the world in the family of the thousand-rayed sun. It is here that Paramātma shows the glory of sages. He himself would be born of a sage, Kaśyapa, as Vāmana, or he would become a disciple of a sage as of Viśvāmitra or Vaśishṭha, and would also subdue a sage run amuck:

कृशाश्वान्तेवासी जयति भगवान् कौशिकमुनिः
सहस्राशोर्वंशे जगति विजयी क्षत्रमधुना ।
विनेता क्षत्रारेर्जगदभयदानव्रतधरः
शरण्यो लोकानां दिनकरकुलेन्दुर्विजयते ॥

Mahāvīracharita 4, 1.

But still Bhavabhūti makes it clear that Paraśurāma is not one whom Rāma would regard in the least unreverently or in a manner unworthy. It is rather the other way. Rāma, with his hands clasped in adoration after overcoming him, begs pardon of him, requesting him to graciously forgive the slight lack in behaviour towards him which was purely providential and beyond his control, recalling with reverence that his feet were adored by the highest seers of Vedic thought as he was the foremost in Vedic lore, penance and practice of austerity, being almost an inexhaustible treasure of these:

यद्ब्रह्मवादिभिरुपासितवन्द्यपादे विद्यातपोव्रतनिधौ तपतां वारिष्ठे ।
दैवात्कृतस्त्वयि मया विनयापचारस्तत्र प्रसीद भगवन्नयमञ्जलिस्ते ॥

Mahāvīracharita 4, 21.

Indeed Paraśurama's birth is from the great *ṛishi* Jamadagni. His master is no other than the mighty revered lord of the celestials, the wielder of the Pināka bow, Śiva; his valour is not to be described in mere words but in his obvious glory on his path of martial action; his spirit of sacrifice rises to the utmost limit of liberality in unexpectant giving away of the entire earth encircled by the seven oceans to sage Kaśyapa; truly what is it that does not transcend the world in this revered sage who is the treasure house of penance and meditation on the Supreme One:

उत्पत्तिर्जमदग्नितः स भगवान् देवः पिनाकी गुरु-
र्वीर्यं यत्तु न तद्गिरा पथि ननु व्यक्तं हि तत्कर्मभिः ।
त्यागः सप्तसमुद्रमुद्रितमहीनिर्व्याजदानावधिः
सत्यं ब्रह्मतपोनिधेर्भगवतः किं वा न लोकोत्तरम् ॥

Mahāvīracharita 2, 36.

The nobitity of Paraśurāma with all his great attributes is tremendous. In his joy at sighting Rāma, the great hero, still a child, who strangely cnough, instead of rousing his anger for having broken his Master's bow inclines him towards him with affection (Fig. 31); and he wonderingly exclaims within himself, Oh! Rāma! my chest, gnashed on one side by the pestle-like tusk of Gaṇeśa himself in his battle with me, marked elsewhere by the wounds of the arrows of Skanda himself, and now horripilated by the sighting of so wonderful a hero in you, truly desires to embrace you:

हेरम्बदन्तमुसलोल्लिखितैकभित्ति वक्षो विशाखविशिखव्रणलाञ्छितं मे ।
रोमाञ्चकंचुकितमद्भुतवीरलाभाद्यत्सत्यमद्य परिरब्धुमिवेच्छति त्वाम् ॥

Mahāvīracharita 2, 38.

Paraśurāma is one of the incarnations of Vishṇu himself as a sage. In the *Vishṇusahasranāma*, Vishṇu is described as Brahmaṇya, Brahmakṛit, Brahmī, Brahmajña and Brāhmaṇapriya. It is no worder that he assumed birth as Vāmana from Kaśyapa and Aditi and as Paraśurāma of Jamadagni and Reṇukā. The latter descent on earth was for establishing righteous conduct and punishing of wickedness

in so telling a manner as to put down the power of the Kshatriya race twentyone times over for killing an innocent sage in its cupidity for his celestial cow in the hermitage. He taught a lesson that could never be forgotten. Twentyone times he exterminated the earth of all roots of Kshatriya:

त्रिःसप्तकृत्वो जगतीपतीनां हन्ता गुरुर्यस्य स जामदग्न्यः ।
Kirātārjunīya 3, 17.

With the blood of the Kshatriyas he created at Samantapañchaka five *hradas* or lakes to offer handfuls of *nivāpāñjali* of blood instead of water (Fig. 32).

त्रिःसप्तकृत्वः पृथिवीं कृत्वा निःक्षत्रियां प्रभुः ।
समन्तपञ्चके पञ्च चकार रुधिरह्रदान् ॥
Mahābhārata 3,11,7,9.

A sage he was of such lustre of both *brahmatejas* and *kshatriyavīrya*. As Māgha has described Nārada slowly emerging in perceptible form a great lustre seen in the sky, there is a description of Paraśurāma vividly given by Kālidāsa, who wonderfully makes the army of Daśaratha first discern a huge heap of lustre and as they rub their eyes to see better, they slowly make out a human form:

तेजसः सपदि राशिरुत्थितः प्रादुरास किल वाहिनीमुखे ।
यः प्रमृज्य नयनानि सैनिकैर्लक्षणीयपुरुषाकृतिश्चिरात् ॥
Raghuvaṁśa 11, 63.

With a sacred thread as a symbol of his father's portion and the mighty bow as that of his mother he appeared like the cool moon along with the fierce sun, like the welcome sandal tree with the fiery snake entwining it:

पित्र्यमंशमुपवीतलक्षणं मातृकं च धनुरूर्जितं दधत् ।
यः ससोम इव घर्मदीधितिः सद्विजिह्व इव चन्दनद्रुमः ॥
Raghuvaṁśa 11, 64.

Obeying the order of his father, whose words were cruel by his ire roused, he even transgressed the fundamental ethical code, and even as his mother was quivering like a leaf, cut off her head, first conquering compassion and then the entire earth:

येन रोषपरुषात्मनः पितुः शासने स्थितिमिदोऽपि तस्थुषः ।
वेपमानजननीशिरश्छिदा प्रागजीयत धृणा ततो महीं ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 11, 65.

He appeared with the beads of the rosary tucked on his right ear as if counting through them his act of exterminating the Kshatriyas performed twentyone times:

अक्षबीजवलयेन निर्बभौ दक्षिणश्रवणसंस्थितेन यः ।
क्षत्रियान्तकरणैकविंशतेर्व्याजपूर्वगणनामिवोद्वहन् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 11,66.

The *tapasyā* of the *ṛishis* was so potent, that to disturb them was indeed a difficult task for Indra who would ever get frightened when any *ṛishi* excelled the lustre of the sun by the power of his penance. There was such a complete sense of renunciation, that the *ṛishis* themselves were not very anxious to enjoy even the highest heavenly pleasures. Invited personally by Indra himself with the aerial car brought by him to take him to heaven, Śarabhaṅga, in his great admiration for the noble qualities of Rāma, and in his eagerness to welcome him in his hermitage, which he regarded was the greatest privilege and good fortune in his life, completely disregarding the *vimāna* and the lord of the celestials that were waiting for him, stayed on to welcome Rāma. In fact, he tells Rāma that Indra had come to fetch him, but knowing that he was in the vicinity and anxious to welcome him in his hermitage, he had stayed behind. With utmost benevolence born of a great and noble heart, and touched by the sad condition of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, particularly the delicately nurtured Sītā, he offers the great heavenly abodes won by him by his great penance as a gift to Rāma to enable him to enjoy the sweet pleasures of the different celestial worlds:

ततः शक्रोपयानं तु पर्यपृच्छत्स राघवः ।
शरभङ्गश्च तत्सर्वं राघवाय न्यवेदयत् ॥
मापेप वरदो राम ब्रह्मलोकं निनीषति ।
जितमुग्रेण तपसा दुष्प्रापमकृतात्मभिः ॥
अहं ज्ञात्वा नरव्याघ्र वर्तमानमदूरतः ।
ब्रह्मलोकं न गच्छामि त्वामदृष्ट्वा प्रियातिथिम् ॥
त्वयाहं पुरुषव्याघ्र धार्मिकेण महात्मना ।
समागम्य गमिष्यामि त्रिदिवं देववंसेवितम् ॥

अक्षया नरशार्दूल मया लोका जिताः शुभाः ।
ब्राह्म्याश्च नाकपृष्ठाद्याश्च प्रतिगृह्णीष्व मामकान् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2,5,28-32.

The *ṛishi* had not only appreciated Rāma's great character which he placed above his own journey to heaven but was prepared to give away so many of the great *lokas* won by him by the deepest panance. This indeed is always the true spirit of renunciation in a *ṛishi*. Caring so little for it, Śarabhaṅga made an offering (*āhuti*) of his body worn out and composed only of skin and bone: and even as Rāma wondered, he entered the fire to be consumed (Fig. 33). This is the way of the ancients. 'Wait and see Oh, Rāma! exclaimed the sage before he entered the fire:

एष पन्था नरव्याघ्र मुहूर्तं पश्य तात माम् ।
यावज्जहामि गात्राणि जीर्णं त्वचमिवोरगः ॥
ततोऽग्निं सुसमाधाय हुत्वा चाज्येन मंत्रवित् ।
शरभङ्गो महातेजाः प्रविवेश हुताशनम् ॥
तस्य रोमाणि केशं च ददाहाग्निर्महात्मनः ।
जीर्णं त्वचं तथास्थीनि यच्च मांसं सशोणितम् ॥
रामस्तु विस्मितो भ्रात्रा भार्यया च सहात्मवान् ।

Rāmāyaṇa 2,5,38-41.

Rāma's wonder at the way the sage entered and offered himself in the fire that never faded from his memory, is reflected in his remark to Sītā as he approaches in the aerial car Pushpaka the hermitage once occupied by Śarabhaṅga recalling the never to be forgotten event. This is the purifying penance grove here in front of us, a great refuge as it were to all, hermitage of Śarabhaṅga, who, the very embodiment of purity, tended the fire with offerings of sacred fuel all his life and finally offered his own body consecrated and sanctified over again by the utterance of holy Vedic chantings:

अदः शरण्यं शरभङ्गनाम्नस्तपोवनं पावनमाहितग्नेः ।
चिराय संतर्प्य समिद्भिरग्निं यो मंत्रपूतं तनुमप्यहौषीत् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,45.

The other great sage that Rāma met immediately was Sutīkshṇa (Fig. 34). Even while returning by the aerial car Rāma points to Sītā and mentions Sutīkshṇa as only sharp in his name but soft and self-

controlled in spirit. His severe penance was such that in the midst of four blazing fires around, and with the scorching sun above as the fifth, burning the forehead of his raised head, he was engaged in penance:

हविर्भुजामेधवता चतुर्णा मध्ये ललाटतपसप्तसप्ति. ।
असौ तपस्यत्यपरस्तपस्वी नाम्ना सुतीक्ष्णश्चरितेन दान्त: ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,41.

He is a sage of such great self control, unmoved by any pleasurable objects, completely lost in meditation and penance, that Kālidāsa describes Sutīkshṇa in the words of Rāma, that the blandishments of the celestial nymphs sent by Indra in his own suspicious fear to wean him from his purpose, were indeed completely ineffective, however alluring their sidelong glances, accompaniments to their alluring smiles and their partially exposed hip bejewelled by the waistzone, intent on corrupt purpose:

अमु महासप्रहितेक्षणानि व्याजार्धसदर्शितमेखलानि ।
नाल विकर्तु जनितेण्द्रशङ्क सुराङ्गनाविभ्रमचेष्टितानि ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,42.

But still the *ṛishi* has the highest regard for character, and as Rāma moves in the aerial chariot towards Ayodhyā and bows to him, he turns his sight lovingly towards the aerial car for a minute and wedded to taciturnity, graciously nods his head in recognition of his acceptance of his obeisance, but withdraws his eye again to fix it on the thousandrayed sun which is the mode of severe penance. With his left hand ever lifted up in rigorous penance he waves to greet me with the right one encircled by the rosary (*akshamālā*) on the wrist often used to fondly stroke the pet deer in the hermitage and cut the *kuśa* grass for ritual.

एषोऽक्षमालावलय मृगाणा कण्डूयितर कुशसूचिलावम् ।
सभाजने मे भुजमूर्ध्ववाहु. सव्येतरं प्राघ्वमित. प्रयुङ्क्ते ॥
वाचयमत्वात्प्रणति ममैप कम्पेन किंचित्प्रतिगृह्य मूर्ध्न. ।
दृष्टि विमानव्यवधानमुक्त पुन सहस्रार्चिपि सनिधत्ते ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,43-44

At long last Śarabhanga could at least think of accepting the invitation of Indra to go to the celestial world that he had won by

his severe penance. But a classical instance of one who, invited by Indra by sending his charioteer with the *vimāna* to fetch the sage to heaven as a reward for his great good deeds and penance, rejected the offer politely, as he decided that it was not worth accepting, is Mudgala. The story of Mudgala is indeed a very interesting one. He could stand the test of even the most irascible sage Durvāsa in the discharge of a peculiar penance that he was observing, partaking food only once a fortnight with his entire family from only one measure of grain collected by him like a bird, observing the *kapotavrata* or the mode of the pigeon that picks grain. He would collect for a fortnight, and on the new and full moon days, after duly offering the cooked food to the celestials and the guests, he would partake of it with his family, and spend the rest of the time in the highest penance. Indra himself with other celestials would personally come to him to receive the offering he made to the celestials in the *yajñā*, though normally the celestials would remain invisible and receive the offering through the fire, the flaming fire being the mouth of the *devas*: अग्निमुखा वै देवाः He was so great and so full of goodwill to the entire world without a thought for himself that the food that he had would increase in proportion to the number of guests that arrived and there could never be a shortage nor ever arise an instance of his feeling embarrassed in his inability to feed a guest. His fame as a *dharmishṭha* or the highest in righteousness so spread that Durvāsa himself came to test him.

Strangely dressed and appearing almost deranged in mind, indulging in a variety of harsh expression, he arrived to feed at his place, was received most cordially by Mudgala, offered water to wash his feet, for the holy sip and for washing his palms by pouring into them. To him, ever so hungry, he offered food, with special attention shown him in his compassion for one appearing deranged in mind. The hungry one ate it all up in its entirety, and having rubbed his body with the remains, left as he had arrived. The next fortnight he repeated it. On that occasion also, Mudgala and his family went without food. Undaunted he again gleaned and gathered grain. Hunger did not worry Mudgala nor in the least ruffle his mind; there was neither anger nor a feeling of acrimony, contempt or agitation in the entire family by the noble example set by Mudgala.

Durvāsa repeated this six times, but could not see the least trace f change in the demeanour of Mudgala whose character was pure and mind immaculate. The extremely pleased Durvāsa remarked to Mudgala that in the world there was not another like him who would give away without the least selfish thought about himself. Hunger is such that it kills righteousness, takes away steadfastness of mind and bravery. The tongue ever running after taste appropriates taste ever to itself. The life breath itself exists on food and the mind which is ever so fickle cannot be bridled. It is determined penance that can make steadfast both the mind and the sensory organs. Whatever is earned by wearisome exertion is difficult to be given away in its entirety in the most righteous manner. I am extremely pleased, most obliged and happy in having met you. In you is completely established victory over the senses, steadfastness, proper discrimination, self-control, patience, compassion, truth, and righteousness, in short, everything. There is no one your equal in immaculate character. You have won the highest celestial worlds and reached the zenith of glory. Oh how wonderful that your gift has been proclaimed as the highest even by the denizens of heaven! With this very body of yours you would go to heaven for your good deeds. As sage Durvāsa spoke thus, the messenger of the gods arrived to meet Mudgala with the aerial car that could go at will, yoked to swans, and warbling cranes, tinkling with rows of bells decorating it, looking so wondrous and wafting great perfume. He respectfully addressed the sage. Here is the celestial car that you have won by your great deeds. Please mount, Oh great sage! you have come to the height of your glory.

Mudgala in turn questioned the messenger of the gods. I would like to know the merits of those dwelling in heaven. What are their merits? What is their penance and what are their ideals? What is happiness in heaven and what are the demerits? Seven steps walked together makes one a friend. It is as a friend that I am putting you this question. Please explain to me truthfully all this. The messenger promptly replied. You are indeed wonderfully great in spirit, as you are still pondering over the merit or otherwise of the happiness of heaven that has come abegging to you to invite you to dwell therein. Heaven is yonder there, the great good path, eternally the way of the celestials, not available for any lacking in penance or in the performance

of the sacrifices (*yajña*). It is impossible for those who utter falsehood or deny the existence of God. The righteous ones, with self-control and patience, free from envy, imbued with self-abrogation, valiant on the battlefield, go to these meritorious worlds. The celestials, the Sādhyas, all the sages, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, all these are there, each in an assigned place. All the worlds are so bright and auspicious, full of lustre and yielding all desires. The golden Meru, the lord of mountains, is thousands of *yojanas* hence with its lovely celestial gardens like Nandana and others, happy pleasances to roam about and available only for those of merit. Here there is neither hunger, thirst nor fatigue, heat or cold, fear in any form, repugnance, or inauspiciousness. The fragrance here is always pleasant, the touch so delicate, the sounds so sweet and melodious. There is neither sorrow nor old age nor lamentation. This is the world won by great good deeds. Lustrous is the body for those here. Birth here is not through parents but by deeds of merit. Sweat, stink and fouling of any sort are here unknown. The clothes are ever bright, free from dust and the garlands never fade and are ever of pleasant perfume. The travel is always by the aerial car. Here there is no jealousy, grief, ignorance, hatred, These are the merits of heaven. Further up above these are yet other superior worlds. They are the holy ones for those that have realised the Brahman and rendered holy by their deeds. These are super-celestials called Ribhus whom the celestials themselves adore. Light emanates from these *lokas* that are self-illumined and yield all desires. There is here neither glamour for nymphs nor wealth or prosperity. They live on neither the offerings made in the fire nor on ambrosia. Even though amidst pleasures, the super-celestials have no desire for pleasures. They continue through the cycles of aeons. How can there be death ever for them? Joy, satisfaction, happiness, misery, likes and dislikes are equally absent. Even the gods long for such a life. This is accomplishment that is next to impossible. These thirty-three gods in their own worlds are reached by the wisest seers by great penance, sacrifice and gifts. All these you will enjoy by your good deeds which shine bright. This is the happiness in heaven diverse in form. These are the merits and now I recount the defects. Here one enjoys the fruit of good action. There is no fresh action possible here except eating up completely the entire stock of merit without adding a whit to it. This is a serious setback as at the end of

the enjoyment of the fruit, there is a downward fall, with the consequent misery in recalling earlier pleasures and the jealousy born of observing varying proportion of prosperity enjoyed by even the celestials themselves placed in lower gradations of position. When memory fails, dust gathers, garlands fade, it is understood that the time for the fall has come. These are disadvantages in all the worlds starting from Brahmaloka itself. This is, however, a good point even in the fall, as on earth, one could again gather merit by performing good deeds and again rise to enjoy in heaven. If one does not realise this and indulges in wicked deeds he goes into darkness and hell. Whatever is done here is enjoyed there hereafter. This is the land for deeds good or bad, and the world of enjoyment is heaven.

Mudgala again asked the Devadūta to narrate to him about the world completely free from shortcomings. The messenger of the gods then explained to him that the highest world of Vishṇu beyond that of Brahmā was immaculate, eternal, lustrous and the one absolute. There none with desires go, nor those with vanity, greed, anger, passion, ignorance, spirit of vengeance, wickedness. Only those completely void of the sense of I and mine, totally free from ego, monopsychic and non-dualistic in outlook, with perfect self-control and peerless in meditation could go there. Oh! Mudgala! I have narrated to you all that you have asked because of my sympathy for you. Let us now go to heaven.

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Mudgala now thought over what he had listened and, after careful discrimination, bowed to the messenger of the gods, and addressed him, Oh my dear! please go back and may you have a happy journey. I have no need for the pleasures of heaven so heavily marked by blemishes. After a fall from there, the grief is greater and the misery all the more unbearable; hence I have no desire to go to heaven. Where there is neither sorrow nor joy nor even the least movement, that is the place of the Eternal One where I would go. Having so said the sage Mudgala continued his practice of gleaning grain, and as a sage of righteousness pursued the highest control of senses regardless of mockery or praise, treating equally a pebble, piece of stone or gold, and by his great meditation and immaculate knowledge, he became ever absorbed in it, and thereby

having obtained superpower and superknowledge, went into the final bliss which is the highest *nirvāṇa*, attainment of eternity:

शिलोञ्छवृत्तिर्धर्मात्मा मुद्गलः संयतेन्द्रियः ।
आसीद्राजन् कुरुक्षेत्रे सत्यवागनसूयकः ॥
अतिथिव्रती क्रियावांश्च कापोतीं वृत्तिमास्थितः ।...
सपुत्रदारो हि मुनिः पक्षाहारो बभूव ह ।
कपोतवृत्या पक्षेण व्रीहिद्रोणमुपार्जयत् ॥
दर्शं च पौर्णमासं च कुर्वन् विगतमत्सरः ।
देवतातिथिशेषेण कुरुते देहयापनम् ॥
तस्येन्द्रः सहितो देवैः साक्षात्त्रिभुवनेश्वरः ।
प्रत्यगृह्णन् महाराज भागं पर्वणि पर्वणि ॥.....
अतिथिभ्यो ददावन्नं प्रहृष्टेनान्तरात्मना ।
व्रीहिद्रोणस्य तद्यस्य ददतोऽन्नं महात्मनः ॥
शिष्टं मात्सर्यहीनस्य वर्धतेऽतिथिदर्शनात् ।
तच्छतान्यपि भुञ्जन्ति ब्राह्मणानां मनीषिणाम् ।
मुनेस्त्यागविशुध्या तु तदन्नं वृद्धिमृच्छति ॥
तं तु शुश्राव धर्मिष्ठं मुद्गलं शंसितव्रतम् ।
दुर्वासा नृप दिग्वासास्तमथाभ्याजगाम ह ॥
विभ्रच्चानियतं वेषमुन्मत्त इव पाण्डव ।
विकचः परुषा वाचो व्याहरन्विविधा मुनिः ॥
अभिगम्याथ तं विप्रमुवाच मुनिसत्तमः ।
अन्नार्थिनमनुप्राप्तं विद्धि मां द्विजसत्तम ॥
स्वागतं तेऽस्त्विति मुनिं मुद्गलः प्रत्यभाषत ।
पाद्यमाचमनीयं च प्रतिपाद्यार्घ्यमुत्तमम् ॥
प्रादात्स तापसायान्नं क्षुधितायातिथिव्रती ।
उन्मत्ताय परां श्रद्धामास्थाय स धृतव्रतः ॥
ततस्तदन्नं रसवत्स एव क्षुधयान्वितः ।
बुभुजे कृत्स्नमुन्मत्तः प्रादात्तस्मै च मुद्गलः ॥
भुक्त्वा चान्नं ततः सर्वमुच्छिष्टेनात्मनस्ततः ।
अथाङ्गं लिलिपेऽन्नेन यथागतमगाच्च सः ॥
एवं द्वितीये संप्राप्ते यथाकाले मनीषिणः ।
आगम्य बुभुजे सर्वमन्नमुञ्छोपजीविनः ॥
निराहारस्तु स मुनिरुञ्छमार्जयते पुनः ।
न चैनं विक्रियां नेतुमशकन्मुद्गलं क्षुधा ॥
न क्रोधो न च मात्सर्यं नावमानो न संभ्रमः ।
सपुत्रदारमुञ्छन्तमाविवेश द्विजोत्तमम् ॥

तथा तमुञ्छधर्माणं दुर्वासा मुनिसत्तमम् ।
उपतस्थे यथाकालं षट्कृत्वः कृतनिश्चयः ।।
न चास्य मनसा किंचिद्विकारं ददृशे मुनिः ।
शुद्धसत्वस्य शुद्धं स ददृशे निर्मलं मनः ।।
तमुवाच ततः प्रीतः स मुनिर्मुद्गलं ततः ।
त्वत्समो नास्ति लोकेऽस्मिन् दाता मात्सर्यवर्जितः ।।
क्षुद्धर्मसंज्ञां प्रणुदत्यादत्ते धैर्यमेव च ।
रसानुसारिणी जिह्वा कर्षत्येव रसान्प्रति ।।
आहारप्रभवा प्राणा मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
मनसश्चेन्द्रियाणां चाप्यैकाग्र्यं निश्चितं तपः ।।
श्रमेणोपार्जितं त्यक्तुं दुःखं शुद्धेन चेतसा ।
तत्सर्वं भवता साधो यथावदुपपादितम् ।।
प्रीताः स्मोऽनुगृहीताश्च समेत्य भवता सह ।
इन्द्रियाभिजयो धैर्यं संविभागो दमः शमः ।।
दया सत्यं च धर्मश्च त्वयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
जितास्ते कर्मभिर्लोकाः प्राप्तोऽसि परमां गतिम् ।।
अहो दानं विघुष्टं ते सुमहत् स्वर्गवासिभिः ।
सशरीरो भवान् गन्ता स्वर्गं सुचरितव्रत ।।
इत्येवं वदतस्तस्य तदा दुर्वाससो मुनेः ।
देवदूतो विमानेन मुद्गलं प्रत्युपस्थितः ।।
हससारसयुक्तेन किंकिणीजालमालिना ।
कामगेन विचित्रेण दिव्यगन्धवता तथा ।।
उवाच चैनं विप्रर्षिं विमानं कर्मभिर्जितम् ।
समुपारोह संसिद्धं प्राप्तोसि परमां मुने ।।
तमेवं वादिनमृषिर्देवदूतमुवाच ह ।
इच्छामि भवता प्रोक्तं गुणं स्वर्गनिवासिनाम् ।।
के गुणास्तत्र वसतां किं तपः कश्च निश्चयः ।
स्वर्गे तत्र सुखं किं च दोषो वा देवदूतक ।।
सतां साप्तपदं मैत्रमाहुः सन्तः कुलोचिताः ।
मित्रतां च पुरस्कृत्य पृच्छामि त्वामहं विभो ।।
यदत्र तथ्यं पथ्यं च तद्ब्रवीह्यविचारयन् ।
श्रुत्वा तथा करिष्यामि व्यवसायं गिरा तव ।।

Mahābhārata 3,260,3-36.

महर्षे आर्यबुद्धिस्त्वं यः स्वर्गसुखमुत्तमम् ।
संप्राप्तं बहु मन्तव्यं विमृशस्यबुधो यथा ।।
उपरिष्टादसौ लोको योऽयं स्वरिति संज्ञितः ।.....

नातप्ततपसः पुंसो नामहायज्ञयाजिनः ।
नानृता नास्तिकाश्चैव तत्र गच्छन्ति मुद्गल ॥
धर्मात्मानो जितात्मानः शान्ता दान्ता विमत्सराः ।
दानधर्मरता मर्त्याः शूराश्चाहवलक्षणाः ॥
तत्र गच्छन्ति धर्माग्रंच कृत्वा शमदमात्मकम् ।
देवाः साध्यास्तथा विश्वे तथैव च महर्षयः ॥.....
एषां देवनिकायानां पृथक् पृथगनेकशः ।
भास्वन्तः कामसंपन्ना लोकास्तेजोमयाः शुभाः ॥.....
मेरुः पर्वतराड् यत्र देवोद्यानानि मुद्गल ।.....
न क्षुत्पिपासे न ग्लानिर्न शीतोष्णे भयं तथा ।.....
मनोज्ञः सर्वतो गन्धः सुखस्पर्शश्च सर्वशः ॥
शब्दः श्रुतिमनोग्राह्यः सर्वतस्तत्र वै मुने ।
न शोको न जरा तत्र नायासपरिदेवने ॥.....
सुकृतैस्तत्र पुरुषाः संभवन्त्यात्मकर्मभिः ।
तैजसानि शरीराणि भवन्त्यत्रोपपद्यताम् ॥.....
न म्लायन्ति स्रजस्तेषां दिव्यगन्धमनोरमाः ।.....
तेषां तथाविधानां तु लोकानां मुनिपुगव ।
उपर्युवरि लोकस्य लोका दिव्यगुणान्विताः ॥.....
यत्र यान्त्यृषयो ब्रह्मन् पूताः स्वैः कर्मभिः शुभैः ।
ऋभवो नाम तत्रान्ये देवानामपि देवताः ॥.....
न तेषा स्त्रीकृतस्तापो न लोकैश्वर्यमत्सरः ।
न वर्तयन्त्याहुतिभिस्ते नाप्यमृतभोजनाः ॥.....
न सुखे सुखकामास्ते देवदेवाः सनातनाः ।.....
जरा मृत्युः कुतस्तेषां हर्षः प्रीतिः सुखं न च ।
न दुःखं न सुखं चापि रागद्वेषौ कुतो मुने ॥
देवानामपि मौद्गल्य कांक्षिता सा गतिः परा ।
दुष्प्रापा परमा सिद्धिरगम्या कामगोचरैः ॥.....
त भुक्त्व सुकृतैर्लब्धं तपसा द्योतितप्रभः ।.....
कृतस्य कर्मणस्तत्र भुज्यते यत्फलं दिवि ।
न चान्यत्क्रियते कर्म मूलच्छेदेन भुज्यते ॥
सोऽत्र दोषो मम मतस्तस्यान्ते पतनं च यत् ।.....
असंतोषः परीतापो दृष्ट्वा दीप्ततराः श्रियः ।
यद्भूयत्यवरे स्थाने स्थितानां तत्सुदुष्करम् ॥
संज्ञामोहश्च पततां रजसा च प्रधर्षणम् ।
प्रम्लानेषु च माल्येषु ततः पिपतिषोर्भयम् ॥.....
अयं त्वन्यो गुणः श्रेष्ठश्च्युताना स्वर्गतो मुने ।
शुभानुशययोगेन मनुष्येषूपजायते ॥

तत्रापि स महाभागः सुखभागभिधीयते ।
न चेत्संबुध्यते तत्र गच्छत्यधमतां ततः ॥
इह यत्क्रियते कर्म तत्परत्रोपभुज्यते ।
कर्मभूमिरियं ब्रह्मन् फलभूमिरसौ मता ॥
महन्तस्तु अमी दोषास्त्वया स्वर्गस्य कीर्तिताः ।
निर्दोष एव यस्त्वन्यो लोकं तं प्रवदस्व मे ॥
ब्रह्मणः सदनादूर्ध्वं तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ।
शुद्धं सनातनं ज्योतिः परं ब्रह्मेति यद्विदुः ॥
न तत्र विप्र गच्छन्ति पुरुषा विषयात्मकाः ।
दम्भलोभमहाक्रोधमोहद्रोहैरभिद्रुताः ॥
निर्ममा निरहंकारा निर्द्वन्द्वाः संयतेन्द्रियाः ।
ध्यानयोगपराश्चैव तत्र गच्छन्ति मानवाः ॥.....
एतच्छ्रुत्वा तु मौद्गल्यो वाक्यं विमिमृशे धिया ।
विमृश्य च मुनिश्रेष्ठो देवदूतमुवाच ह ॥
देवदूत नमस्तेस्तु गच्छ तात यथासुखम् ।
महादोषेण मे कार्यं न स्वर्गेण सुखेन वा ॥
पतनान्ते महद्दुःखं परितापः सुदारुणः ।
स्वर्गभाजश्चरन्तीह तस्मात्स्वर्गं न कामये ॥
यत्र गत्वा न शोचन्ति न व्यथन्ति चलन्ति वा ।
तदहं स्थानमत्यन्तं मार्गयिष्यामि केवलम् ॥
इत्युक्त्वा स मुनिर्वाक्यं देवदूतं विसृज्य तम् ।
शिलोञ्छवृत्तिर्धर्मात्मा शाममातिष्ठदुत्तमम् ॥
तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्भूत्वा समलोष्टाश्मकांचनः ।
ज्ञानयोगेन शुद्धेन ध्याननित्यो बभूव ह ॥
ध्यानयोगाद्बलं लब्ध्वा प्राप्य बुद्धिमनुत्तमाम् ।
जगाम शाश्वतीं सिद्धिं परां निर्वाणलक्षणाम् ॥

Mahābhārata 3,261, 1-47

In the context of Mudgala's decision to leave alone heaven as unworthy of his choice and thinking of only *kaivalya* as the highest, it is interesting to recall exactly similar and probably even more telling evaluation of Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita, not just rejecting heaven but actually making fun of the craze for such a mockery as the pleasures of heaven. The lovely youthful damsels here on earth wink their eyes and there yonder they do not. This is all the difference between heaven and earth. What is there in heaven and why exclaim 'heaven! heaven!'. If one remembers just a little the result of the anger of Agastya or the curse of the sage Gautama that taught logic, no one

would wish even for his worst enemy the high state of Indra. Even if the celestial city Amarāvatī were reached or even the great city of four-faced Brahmā itself, what is it that has been really achieved, if it is only to come back again to this earth? Many a wife has been enjoyed, many a son and many a grandson, an ideal length of a hundred years of life has been experienced: yet, in truth, is there the mind for any one to give up life :

निमिषन्त्यत्र तरुण्यस्तत्र तरुण्यो न निमिषन्ति ।
ईदृक्षो हि विशेषः स्वर्गः स्वर्ग इति किं तत्र ।।
कोपो मैत्रावरुणेः शापो वा तार्किकस्य मुनेः ।
संस्मर्यते यदि सकृच्छत्रोरपि मास्तु शक्रपदम् ।।
गच्छात्वमरावत्या गच्छतु चतुराननस्य वा नगरे ।
पुनरागन्तव्यं यदि पुंसा किं साधितं भवति ।।
भुक्ता बहवो दारा लब्धाः पुत्राश्च पौत्राश्च ।
नीत शतमप्यायुः सत्यं वद मर्तुमस्ति मनः ।।

Vairāgyaśataka 60-63

The body is there for the fool to enjoy. For the discriminating ones it is for meditation. For those who are ignorant and vain, it is neither for enjoyment nor for meditation:

भोगाय पामराणां योगाय विवेकिनां शरीरमिदम् ।
भोगाय च योगाय च न कल्पते दुर्विदग्धानाम् ।।

Vairāgyaśataka, 67

Kālidāsa describes the glory of Śiva as the acme of perfection of asceticism, though his body is completely interspersed with that of his beloved one (Fig. 35):

कान्तासंमिश्रदेहोऽप्यविषयमनसां यः परस्तादयतीनाम ।

Mālavikāgnimitra 1, 1.

Asceticism is supremely illustrated at its best when the mind is unruffled even in the presence of disturbing factors:

विकारहेतौ सति विक्रियन्ते येषां न चेतांसि त एव धीराः ।

Kumārasambhava 1,59.

ध्यानं रत्नशिलासु विबुधस्त्रीसंनिधौ संयमः ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7,12

Some of the *rishis* are the highest examples of this control of senses.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* is given the story of sage Gautama, with Ahalyoddhāra by Rāma as the finale (Fig. 36), who, given charge in his hermitage of the most precious custody of a specially created paragon of beauty, Ahalyā, would not so much as even glance at her, least of all be emotionally stirred by her beauty. In divine appreciation of his steadfastness of mind which could not be moved by even such celestial beauty, Ahalyā was given to be Gautama's wife by Prajāpati himself who later narrates it to Indra. I thus created one damsel specially exceeding in excellence all others. Whatever was the best in each limb of humanity was chosen to create this Ahalyā to completely excel others in her charm. Hala connotes a defect and Halya is what is born of defect. As there was not a trace of defect in her, she became famous as the unblemished Ahalyā and so I named her. But after I created her, I wondered whose spouse she was to be. In your mind, because of your exalted position, you imagined that she would be yours. I had kept her as a precious object in the care of sage Gautama. For years she was there as a deposit carefully protected. Having observed the steadfastness of mind of the great sage as the fruit of his great asceticism, I gave her to be his wife and that sage of great ethical spirit (*dharma*), sported with her as his wife :

सोह् तासा विशेषार्थं स्त्रियमेका विनिर्ममे ।
यद्यत्प्रजाना प्रत्यङ्ग विशिष्ट तत्तदुद्धृतम् ॥
ततो मया रूपगुणैरहल्या स्त्री विनिर्मिता ।
हल नामेह वैरूप्य हल्य तत्प्रभव भवेत् ॥
यस्मान्न विद्यते हल्य तेनाहल्येति विश्रुता ।
अहल्येति मया शक्र तस्या नाम प्रवर्तितम् ॥
निर्मिताया च देवेन्द्र तस्या नार्या सुरर्षभ ।
भविष्यतीति कस्यैषा मम चिंता ततोऽभवत् ॥
त्व तु शक्र तदा नारी जानीषे मनसा प्रभो ।
स्थानाधिकतया पत्नी ममैषेति पुरदर ॥
सा मया न्यासभूता तु गौतमस्य महात्मन. ।
न्यस्ता बहूनि वर्षाणि तेन निर्यातिता च ह ॥
ततस्तस्य परिज्ञाय मया स्थैर्य महात्मन ।
ज्ञात्वा तपसि सिद्धिं च पत्न्यर्थं स्पर्शिता तदा ॥
स तया सह धर्मात्मा रमते स्म महामुनि ।

Rāmāyaṇa 7,30,23-30.

Another instance is Vaśishṭha himself whose very name suggests the highest self control. His high birth from Brahmā himself, that entitled him to the highest reverence, was specially perfumed, as it were, by the great glory of self control. This son of Brahmā, consort of Adundhatī, conquered for ever, by his penance, passion and anger (*kāma* and *krodha*), unvanquishable even by the celestials, which in turn, personified, ever shampooed his feet, as he had complete control over his sensory organs. He was thus appropriately called Vaśishṭha. The example of his self control is seen in this, that in spite of all the offence towards him by Viśvāmitra, being of the noblest spirit, he controlled his anger, and even though he was deprived by him of his children, and he was ever so powerful, acted as if he were powerless, by completely ignoring and excusing him, and never tried to destroy Viśvāmitra. Though capable of bringing back to life his dead progeny by calling them back from the home of Yama, he would not transgress the natural laws of death like the ocean its boundary line of shore skirt. Hence it is that having obtained him as a preceptor of great self control, all the noble Ikshvāku kings could become emperors on earth:

ब्रह्मणो मानसः पुत्रो वशिष्ठोऽरुन्धतीपतिः ।
तपसा निर्जितौ शश्वदजेयावमरैरपि ॥
कामक्रोधावुभौ यस्य चरणौ संववाहतुः ।
इन्द्रियाणां वशकरो वशिष्ठ इति चोच्यते ॥
यस्तु नोच्छेदनं चक्रे कुशिकानामुदारधीः ।
विश्वामित्रापराधेन धारयन्मन्युमुत्तमम् ॥
पुत्रव्यसनसंतप्तः शक्तिमानप्यशक्तवत् ।
विश्वामित्रविनाशाय न चक्रे कर्म दारुणम् ॥
मृतांश्च पुनराहर्तुं शक्तः पुत्रान् यमक्षयात् ।
कृतान्तं नातिचक्राम वेलामिव महोदधिः ॥
यं प्राप्य विजितात्मानं महात्मानं नराधिपाः ।
इक्ष्वाकवो महीपाला लेभिरे पृथिवीमिमाम् ॥
पुरोहितमिमं प्राप्य वाशिष्ठं ऋषिसत्तमम् ।

Mahābhārata 1, 173, 5-11.

It is very interesting indeed that in spite of this asceticism Vaśishṭha is the only one among the seven *ṛishis* who is always accompanied by Arundhatī his spouse. When Śiva thought of the *saptaṛishis* to be sent by him to ask for the hand of Pārvatī in wedlock of Himavān the lord of the mountains, the seven *ṛishis* accompanied

by Arundhatī presented themselves before him to go on that task.

ऋषीन् ज्योतिर्मयान् सप्त सस्मार स्मरणामनः ।
ते प्रभामण्डलैर्व्योम द्योतयन्तस्तपोनिधाः ॥
सारुन्धतीका. सपदि प्रादुरासन् पुरः प्रभोः ।
तेषा मध्यगता साध्वी पत्यु. पादार्पितेक्षणा ॥
साक्षादिव तपःसिद्धिर्वभासे वह्निरुन्धती ।

Kumārasambhava 6,3,4,11.

Kālidāsa specially mentions how after the evening prayer Vaśishṭha is seated with his wife Arundhatī in his hermitage to give audience to Dilīpa and his queen looking almost like the flaming god of fire Agni with his consort Svāhā:

विधेः सायन्तनस्यान्ते स ददर्श तपोनिधिम् ।
अन्वासितमरुन्धत्या स्वाहयेव हविर्भुजम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1, 56.

Vaśishṭha's attitude towards life itself, a detached outlook and complete spirit of renunciation, is seen in the way he gives his message to the lamenting Aja. Engaged in special sacrificial duties, he could not neglect them to go out for this purpose, and sends a disciple of his with a message. In this there are three verses that are more significant than the rest clearly giving the mind of Vaśishṭha so completely detached. Whether you weep for her or try to follow her in death, how can you get her back again? Surely, in consonance with their own acts on earth the pathways are always different for all who attain the other world. The fool imagines that a dart has been plunged into his heart by the death of his beloved one, but the discriminating one with steady perception, understands that it is a dart pulled out to open up the gateway for the highest bliss. When the union or separation of the soul and the body are so well known, how can the wise one lament over separation from a purely external object?

रुदता कुत एव सा पुनर्भवता नानुमृतापि लभ्यते ।
परलोकजुषां स्वकर्मभिर्गतयो भिन्नपथा हि देहिनाम् ॥.....
अवगच्छति मूढचेतनः प्रियनाश हृदि शल्यमर्पितम् ।
स्थिरधीस्तु तदेव मन्यते कुशलद्वारतया समुद्धृतम् ॥
स्वशरीरशरीरिणावपि श्रुतसंयोगविपर्यय यदा ।
विरहः किमिवानुतापयेद्वद बाह्यं विषयैर्विपश्चिताम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 8,85,88-89.

Another instance of complete renunciation and total detachment from those very precious objects, which the whole world would crave to have by sacrifices and motificatian, is Kaśyapa who performs penance amidst those very surroundings that allure desire:

विबुधस्त्रीमंनिधौ संयम· ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7,12.

Kaśyapa is still intimately associated with Aditi. When Mātali enquires of a disciple whether Kaśyapa could be approached, he is told by him that he is engaged with Aditi, the daughter of Daksha, seated in the company of the wives of other sages assembled and at her request discoursing to her on the ethics of a devoted wife:

दाक्षायण्या पतिव्रताधर्ममधिकृत्य पृष्टस्तस्यै महर्षिपत्नीसहितायै कथयतीति ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7.

The complete control of senses or *brahmacharya* in many of the *ṛishis* is so well known and established that Dushyanta is certain that Śakuntalā could not be the daughter of Kaṇva who is ever lost in meditation and could never think of a householder's life. That is why when Dushyanta asks the companions of Śakuntalā how when venerable Kāśyapa was very well known to be ever lost in meditation with his mind away from mundane things, this, their companion, could be his daughter. Anasūyā replies by explaining how Kuśika the great *rājaṛishi* is her parent. Abandoned as a child she was brought up by Kāśyapa Kaṇva who was thus her father.

राजा—भगवान् काश्यपः शाश्वते ब्रह्मणि स्थित इति प्रकाशः ।
इयं च वः सखी तदात्मजेति कथमेतत् ?
अनसूया—शृणोत्वार्यः । अस्ति कौशिक इति कृतगोत्रनामधेयो
महाप्रभावो राजर्षिः । तमावयोः प्रियसख्याः प्रभवमवगच्छ ।
उज्झिताया: शरीरसवर्धनादिभिस्तातकाश्यपोऽस्याः पिता ।

Abhijñānaśakuntalam 1.

Yet another great sage, who had no desire for any carnal pleasures but who, purely out of a sense of duty and compassion for his ancestors, hanging head downwards almost falling into a deep ravine by a snap in the thread of their progeny, was Jaratkāru who had all along remained unmarried, but promissed them his willingness to take a wife purely for having a worthy son to continue the line, but on specific conditions, her name to be the same as his, his exemption

from all household cares normally devolving on a householder, and the bride to be offered to him without his having to ask for a maiden in wedlock. These conditions were no sooner set than fulfilled. Vāsuki was only waiting to get Jaratkāru to marry his sister, the princess Jaratkārū, who was not only given in marriage, but he himself attended on him with utmost reverence, his sister being the pink of wifehood and devotion. The glorious offspring born of this was Āstīka (Fig. 37).

The story of Āstīka in the *Mahābhārata* narrating the way Jaratkāru lived with his wife and availed of the earliest opportunity to be back for his penance is indeed very interesting. He was resting with his head on the lap of his wife. The sun was about to set. Realising that it was the time for *sandhyā*, and it was the choice for her to rouse and anger him or allow him dereliction of the religious duty of *sandhyā*, she chose the former to the latter. So roused, his lips quivering in anger, he told her that the sun could not set as he slept which she could not understand and had thus insulted him. He had therefore to leave her and be back again for performance of penance. She pleaded and explained her peculiar position. So soothed he comforted her asking her not to grieve for his absence. He assured her that there was the promised child in her womb, lustrous like the fire, a great sage of the highest ethical spirit, learned in the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas:*

अस्त्ययं सुभगे गर्भस्तव वैश्वानरोपमः ।
ऋषिः परमधर्मात्मा वेदवेदाङ्गपारगः ॥
एवमुक्त्वा स धर्मात्मा जरत्कारुर्महानृषिः ।
उग्राय तपसे भूयो जगाम कृतनिश्चयः ॥

Mahābhārata 1.47,42-43.

That is not the only instance. There are several such to show that *ṛishis* have the highest self control which makes them almost equal to the highest in asceticism, Śiva himself. Agastya was no exception. In fact under similar circumstances, Agastya himself feeling for his ancestors whose fall was imminent by the snap of the thread of the progeny after Agastya, he promised them he would have a son that would continue the line. He requested the king of Vidar-

bha to give him his daughter Lopāmudrā in marriage. Lopāmudrā was so beautiful and so resplendant that none on earth could dare approach her father among the Kshatriya kings to ask him to give her in marriage. But when Agastya asked him, the king was upset, being not so willing to give away his beautiful daughter in marriage to almost a rustic, though of the highest lustre and potency, as he did not himself know how his daughter would react. He was consulting the queen, when the wise girl intervened and offered to marry him. Agastya in his usual spirit of renunciation required his wife also to be in bark garments as his true companion in the simplest mode of life. She left behind her royal jewellery and costume and accepted the rough bark garments to clothe her and both of them were lost in penance in Gaṅgādvāra. She completely forgot all her earlier pleasures in her royal palace. It was indeed an ideal pair, Agastya and Lopāmudrā. She was the ideal wife.

So great was his self control that for several years Agastya could never think of her with any passion. But having promised his ancestors he had to fulfil their desire. Lopāmudrā felt that as overcoming passion and desire they were appropriately saintly in thought and appearance, now in a mood of pleasure, she desired the pleasures of the royal palace to be provided, which Agastya, unwilling to obtain in a trice by his power of penance, obtained through vast treasures by overcoming the two dreaded demons, *Ilvala* and Vātāpi. It is interesting how Agastya queried his wife whether she wanted a thousand sons or a hundred or a single one that could be far superior to a whole brood and the very pink of excellence. She chose the single covetable son and that is how the son Dṛidhasyu was born, learned in all the *Aṅgas*, *Upaṅishads*, *Vedas* and ever uttering them, lustrous and ever intent on *homa* sacrifice, collecting so many sacrificial twigs and carrying them, that he was affectionately called Idhmavāha by Agastya:

ज्वलन्निव प्रभावेन दृढस्युर्नाम भारत ।
साङ्गोपनिषदान् वेदान् जपन्निव महातपाः ॥.....
स बाल एव तेजस्वी पितुस्तस्य निवेशने ।
इध्मानां भारमाजह्रे इध्मवाहस्ततोऽभवत् ॥

Mahābhārata 3.99,25-27.

It is this that Bāna specially mentions in his description of Agastya's hermitage in the vicinity of which the boy appeared moving about. The hermitage of Agastya was purified so to say by this noble progeny, his son Dridhadasyu, who moved from hermitage to hermitage to gather food begged as *bhikshā* in his *vrata* as *brahmachārī*, with a fresh large green leaf to gather the food offered as alms, holding a banyan staff, holy ashes smeared in triple streaks on his body and forehead, dressed in bark garment, a plaited band of *muñja* reeds wound around the waist.

तत्पुत्रेण च गृहीतव्रतेनाषाढिना पवित्रभस्मविरचितत्रिपुण्ड्रकाभरणेन
कुशचीवरवाससा मौञ्जमेखलाकलितमध्येन गृहीतहरितपर्णपुटेन
प्रत्युटजमटता भिक्षां दृढदस्युनाम्ना पवित्रीकृतम् ।

Kādambarī 1, p. 42.

A telling instance of *brahmacharya* of the highest type, where the mind is not in the least affected even in the presence of peerless tempting beauty, is that of Ashṭāvakra who performed great penance. The sage Ashṭāvakra desirous of a householder's life, and having seen Suprabhā, the beautiful daughter of the sage Vadanya, whose form was fair and delicate like the moon or the jasmine flower, with face so charming and eyes so bright, with lustre so dazzling, begged of him to give her to him in wedlock:

अष्ठावक्रो मुनिः पूर्वं विवाहार्थी सुलोचनाम् ।
अपश्यत्सुप्रभा नाम वदन्यस्य मुनेः सुताम् ॥
इन्दुकुन्दाङ्कुराकारसुकुमारतराकृतिम् ।
स तामालोक्य सुमुखी ययाचे सोत्सुको मुनिम ॥
त वदन्योऽवदद्गच्छ विशाला दिशमुत्तराम ।
अतिक्रम्य कुबेरस्य भवनं भवसेवितम् ॥
तत. प्रतिनिवृत्ताय तुभ्य दास्यामि सुप्रभाम् ।

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1377-1380.

The reason for Vadanya setting an impossible task to Ashṭāvakra may on the surface appear to be because of his very appearance but it has to be remembered that though the name Ashṭāvakra continued, he shed the deformity of his limbs just after he triumphed over Bandi at the court of Janaka even as a very young lad with his maternal uncle Śvetaketu son of Uddālaka and almost of his own age.

Bandi was the greatest intellectual of the age who, however, cruelly drowned defeated disputants. Ashṭāvakra's father was also immersed in the river for having failed in his battle of wits with him. The little boy, however, easily put Bandi to discomfiture, who, however, as the son of Varuṇa, in appreciation of the boy, restored him his long-lost parent Kahoḍa. Directed by his father, Ashṭāvakra, bathed in the miraculous stream Samaṅgā near his hermitage in the presence of his mother, lost the deformities in his body that gave him his name and regained comely appearance:

ततोऽष्टावक्रमातुरथान्तिके पिता नदी समङ्गां शीघ्रमिमां विशस्व ।
प्रोवाच चैनं स तथा विवेश समैरङ्गैश्चापि बभूव सद्यः ॥

Mahābhārata 3,134,39.

He was asked by the sage Vadanya to proceed to the extreme north beyond the abode of Kubera and of Śiva and on his return he promised him that he would have her as his wife. The real test of his unruffled mind steady and unprovoked by beauty far exceeding even that of Suprabhā would now be evident in his further peregrination and experience. This is essentially what Vadanya desired to satisfy himself about.

In this context the reason for his choosing to be a householder is that the *ṛishis* required *dharamprajā* or righteous-minded progeny to continue the family and to be free from their obligation to the manes. That is why Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita remarks that Gautama, though convinced that the householder's life was not a unmixed blessing, being a seer that could see far ahead in the right perspective and being the sage that propagated logic itsself, chose the householder's life to any other mode:

दृष्टदोषोऽपि गार्हस्थ्ये दीर्घदर्शितया स्वयम् ।
गार्हस्थ्यमेव परमं मेने नैयायिको मुनिः ॥

Sabhārañjanaśataka 99.

But having taken to heart the act of his spouse Ahalyā, Gautama, extremely distressed in his mind, arrived at the solution of complete annihilation of misery and sorrow by attaining bliss as he was a *muni* of the highest order who could concentrate in attaining it:

गृहिणीवृत्तदोषेण गौतमोऽत्यन्ततापितः ।
आतस्थे दुःखविध्वंस कैवल्यं परमं मुनिः ॥

Sabhārañjanaśataka 94.

Ashṭāvakra undertook the journey and having crossed the Himālaya and the wide rivir Bāhudā, went to the skirts of Kailāsa, saw the abode of the lord of wealth, Kubera, with its Eden-like garden full of Kalpa trees and golden lotuses in lakes. He was cordially received and entertained by Kubera for a year in his jewelled palaces, regaling him with dance and music by celestial nymphs. Thoroughly pleased, he took leave of Kubera and crossing the jewelled mountain track, he went to the forest of jewelled creepers with golden lotuses in cool lakes, in the midst of which was a magnificent palace decorated with gems and pearls. Here he sent word as a guest waiting to be received, when seven lotus-eyed celestial damsels of enthralling beauty decked in jewels offered him worship as a guest. Entering the mansion by the gem-decked steps shooting rays of lustre, he saw an old woman decked in jewels on a jewelled couch. Softly she spoke, offered him a seat, assuaged his fatigue, and set him wondering at all that he saw. In the evening he asked all the girls in attendance to retire retaining only one to attend to his needs. So directed all of them left except the old one attired in moon-white garment. Ashṭāvakra slept on a delicate bed with soft quilt and canopy. From the other bed slowly got up the old woman to approach the sage who was the very personification of self-control (*brahmacharya*). On the pretext of biting cold, with her body shivering, she got on to his bed and violently embraced him In that state immediately he got up and stood unmoved like a log of wood, with his mind perturbed by this embrace from a woman who was a total stranger. Finding him averse to her touch, she spoke sweetly and plaintively, requesting him not to deny her desire for enjoyment. Here is this my jewelled mansion, here my garden of gem creepers. My mind itself is enslaved and delights in you. There is nothing wrong in your accepting me. Women are not to be brushed aside. For them there is no difficulty of fatigue. Women approach men with a snare of passion. They would not refrain either out of consideration of family traditions or jealousy towards even cowives. The fishbannered Cupid always expands his glory among women. What is this foolish talk of

woman being a satī, devoted only to one man as her husband. Like streams that go lower and lower down in different levels, women approach different men egged on by Cupid. Women never discriminate. Even if it cost their life, women value highly the ambrosia of sexual pleasures. Requested ever so coaxingly, being the noble sage that he was, Ashṭāvakra would not a whit encourage her. Next night she repeated her performance and spoke similarly. Please accept my coming to you on my own, unable to bear the heat of passion. Denial of passionate desire is sure death for women. Even this could create no impression on the sage. She again looked at him and spoke. This time she revealed herself. Know me to be the northern quarter that has shown you the guiles of women. You may now go to Vadanya and obtain his daughter. Having heard this Ashṭāvakra wondered, took leave of her and, slowly having learnt the guiles of women, went back to his own hermitage. He then approached Vadanya, acquainted him with all the guiles of women and duly received his daughter Suprabhā as his wife according to the sacred rite of wedding:

इत्युक्तः स वदन्येन प्रतस्थे तां दिशं शनैः ।
ततो हिमाद्रिमुल्लङ्घ्य बाहुदां च महानदीम् ॥.....
स कैलासतटं प्राप्य ददर्श धनदालयम् ।
हेमपङ्कजिनीतीरलसत्कल्पलतावनम् ॥
सादरं पूजितस्तेन राज्ञा वैश्रवणेन सः ।.....
चिरमप्सरसां नृत्तैर्गीतैर्गन्धर्वयोषिताम् ॥
प्रीतिमासाद्य विपुलामामन्त्र्य धनदं ययौ ॥
ततो गिरीन्द्रानुल्लङ्घ्य प्राप रत्नलतावनम् ।
मणिमौक्तिकजालाङ्कं ददर्शोदारमन्दिरम् ॥.....
ततः सप्त विनिर्गत्य कन्याः कमललोचनाः ।
दिव्यभूषणसंपन्नास्तस्यातिथ्यं प्रचक्रिरे ॥
गृहं प्रवेशितस्ताभिर्हेमरत्नासनोज्वलम् ।
ददर्श मणिपर्यङ्के वृद्धां भास्वरभूषणाम् ॥
तया मधुरवादिन्या प्राप निर्दिष्टमासनम् ।
गतक्लमः क्षणं तस्थौ मुनिर्विस्मयनिश्चलः ॥
दिनान्ते सोऽथ ताः प्राह यान्तु सर्वाः स्वमालयम् ।
इत्युक्ते मुनिना सर्वाः प्रययुस्ताः सुलोचनाः ॥
एकैव जरती तत्र तस्थौ शशिसितांशुका ॥
अष्टावक्रोऽथ सुष्वाप शयने स्पर्शशालिनि ।
वितानलम्बि मन्दारदाम्नि स्वच्छोत्तरच्छदे ॥

द्वितीयशयनाद्गृढा समुत्थाय ततः शनैः ।
मुनेः शय्यान्तिकं प्रायान्निभृता ब्रह्मचारिणः ॥
कम्पमानतनुः साथ शय्यामारुह्य विक्लवा ।
मुनिं शीतापदेशेन निविडं परिपस्वजे ॥
आलिंग्यमानः स तया तस्थौ काष्ठमिवाचलः ।
परदारापरिष्वङ्गशङ्कासक्तचिताशय. ॥
साथ त स्पर्शविमुखं प्रणयान्मञ्जुवादिनी ।
उवाच भोगसंकल्पभङ्ग मा मे कृथाः प्रभो ॥
इदं मे रत्नभवन चारु रत्नलतावनम् ।
त्वदधीनमकस्मान्मे चेतो हि रमते त्वयि ॥
न ते दोषोऽस्ति मत्सङ्गे त्याज्या नैव तु योषितः ।
दुर्गम नाभिजानन्ति गणयन्ति न च श्रमम् ॥
प्रयान्ति पुरुषानेव रागवागुरया स्त्रियः ।
नैताः कुलानुरोधेन निवर्तन्ते न चेर्ष्यया ॥
रामास्वरुद्धप्रसरः सर्वथा मकरध्वजः ।
स्त्री सतीति प्रवादोऽयमेकासक्तेति का कथा ॥
नरान्तंर प्रयान्त्येता निम्नान्निम्नमिवापगाः ।
मन्मथप्रेरिता नारी विषमं भजते कथम् ॥
यासा प्राणपणेनापि वल्लभ सुरतामृतम् ।
इत्यर्थ्यमानोऽपि तया नाभ्यनन्दत्स तां मुनिः ॥
अन्येद्युरपि सा रात्रौ तथैव तमभाषत ।
भजस्व स्वयमायातां दुःसहो मे स्मरज्वरः ॥
निषेधो रतिवाञ्छासु निघनं किल योषिताम् ।
इत्युक्त्वा निर्विकारं तं सा दृष्ट्वा पुनरब्रवीत् ॥
मामुत्तरां दिश विद्धि स्त्रीवृत्तान्तं प्रदर्शितम् ।
अधुना तां वदन्यस्य गत्वा प्राप्नुहि कन्यकाम् ॥
एतदाकर्ण्य स मुनिस्तामामन्त्रच सविस्मयः ।
शनैः प्रतिययौ ज्ञातस्त्रीवृत्तो निजमाश्रमम् ॥
ततो वदन्यमभ्येत्य स्त्रीवृत्तान्तं निवेद्य तम् ।
अवापोद्वाहविधिना वितीर्णां तेन सुप्रभाम् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1380-1408.

While these are some of the examples of *ṛishis* unaffected by any disturbing factor coming in the way of their penance, there are also cases where there have been occasional instances of succumbing. Continence with a complete control of the mind forced to celibacy is so difficult of achievement that Bhartrihari has rightly remarked that when outstanding sages like Viśvāmitra, Parāśara and others, who

subsisted only on air, water and leaves if at all as their sustenance, succumbed to the charm of the lotus-faced damsels on the very sight of such celestial beauty, surely if ordinary mortals who partake of sweetened rice soaked in ghee, milk and curd are expected to control their passion, it may equally be easily expected of the mountain Vindhya to float on the waves of the ocean:

विश्वामित्रपराशरप्रभृतयो वाताम्बुपर्णाशनास्तेऽपि
स्त्रीमुखपङ्कजं सुललितं दृष्ट्वैव मोहं गताः।
शाल्यन्नं सघृतं पयोदधियुतं ये भुञ्जते मानवा-
स्तेषमिन्द्रियनिग्रहो यदि भवेद्विन्ध्यः प्लवेत्सागरे ॥

Śṛṅgāraśataka 80

The story of Parāśara's succumbing to the celestial beauty of the damsel Matsyagandhī (of piscine smell) that later became Gandhavatī (sweet-smelling) and also Yojanagandhī (fragrant from a distance) is narrated in the *Ādiparva.* Originally called Satyavatī, she was miraculously got out of a fish, a celestial nymph Adrikā so transformed by a curse, that had accidentally sucked the semen of the emperor Vasu and bore this beautiful girl, and was brought up in the abode of the chief of fishermen. As she plied the ferry on the river, Parāśara amazed at her divine charm and not the least repelled by her smell expressed his passion for her. Knowing his eminence as a sage and her own helplessness as the foster daughter of a fisherman, a virgin unsullied, and the scandal of watchful eyes of those on either bank, the sage by the power of his penance enshrouded the boat by a mist all around. She was amazed but feared her losing her virginity. The sage reassured her and so restored her after their coming together. He also granted her the boon of an ever-present pleasant odour that she could waft from quite a distance. The child born of their union was an immediate occurrence on a tiny island (*dvīpa*) of the river Yamunā, whence called Dvaipāyana, he proved to be a miraculous child of the highest intellect who immediately took leave of his mother to repair for performing penance, promising her his appearance any moment she thought of him:

संत्यज्य मत्स्यरूपं सा दिव्यं रूपमवाप्य च।
सिद्धर्षिचारणपथं जगामाथ वराप्सराः ॥
सा कन्या दुहिता तस्या मत्स्या मत्स्यसगन्धिनी।.....
शुश्रूषार्थं पितुर्नावं वाहयन्ती जले च तम् ॥

तीर्थयात्रां परिक्रामन्नपश्यद्वै पराशरः ।
अतीव रूपसंपन्नां सिद्धानामपि कांक्षिताम् ।।
दृष्टैव स च तां धीमांश्चकमे चारुहासिनीम् ।
दिव्यां ता वासवी कन्यां रम्भोरु मुनिपुङ्गवः ।।
संगमं मम कल्याणि कुरुष्वेत्यभ्यभाषत ।
साब्रवीत्पश्य भगवन् पारावारे स्थितानृषीन् ।।
आवयोर्दृष्टयोरेभिः कथं तु स्यात्समागमः ।
एवं तयोक्तो भगवान्नीहारमसृजत्प्रभुः ।।... ..
विस्मिता साभवत्कन्या व्रीडिता च तपस्विनी ।
विद्धि मा भगवन् कन्यां सदा पितृवशानुगाम् ।।
त्वत्संयोगाच्च दुष्येत कन्याभावो ममानघ ।
एवमुक्तवती तां तु प्रीतिमानृषिसत्तमः ।।
उवाच मत्प्रियं कृत्वा कन्यैव त्वं भविष्यसि ।.....
एवमुक्त्वा वरं वव्रे गात्रसौगन्ध्यमुत्तमम् ।
स चास्यै भगवान्प्रादान्मनसः कांक्षितं भुवि ।।
ततो लब्धवरा प्रीता स्त्रीभावगुणभूषिता ।
जगाम सह संसर्गं ऋषिणाद्भुतकर्मणा ।।
तेन गन्धवतीत्येवं नामास्याः प्रथितं भुवि ।
तस्यास्तु योजनाद्गन्धमाजिघ्रन्त नरा भुवि ।।
तस्या योजनगन्धेति ततो नामापरं स्मृतम् ।.....
जज्ञे च यमुनाद्वीपे पाराशर्यः स वीर्यवान् ।।
स मातरमनुज्ञाप्य तपस्येव मनो दधे ।।
स्मृतोऽहं दर्शयिष्यामि कृत्येष्विति च सोऽब्रवीत् ।
एवं द्वैपायनो जज्ञे सत्यवत्यां पराशरात् ।।
न्यस्तो द्वीपे स यद्बालस्तस्माद्वैपायनः स्मृतः ।

Mahābhārata 1,63,66,69-76,78,80-86.

While *ṛishis* like Triṇabindu, unaffected by bewitching manifestation of the brandishments of celestial nymphs like Hariṇī sent by ever-afraid Indra, cursed them to stop their efforts, their ire roused surging as waves of deluge destroying the barriers of their natural disposition of peace;

चरतः किल दुश्चरं तपस्तृणबिन्दोः परिशङ्कितः पुरा ।
प्रजिघाय समाधिमेदिनी हरिरस्मै हरिणीं सुराङ्गनाम् ।।
स तपःप्रतिबन्धमन्युना प्रमुखाविष्कृतचारुविभ्रमाम् ।
अशपद्भव मानुषीति तां शमवेलाप्रलयोर्मिणा मुनिः ।।

Raghuvaṁśa 8,79-80.

Rambhā, the celestial damsel of exceptional beauty, whom Viśvāmitra cursed to become petrified for a thousand years is another of the unfortunate temptresses:

सहस्राक्षस्य तत्कर्म विज्ञाय मुनिपुंगवः ।
रम्भां क्रोधसमाविष्टः शशाप कुशिकात्मजः ॥
यन्मां लोभयसे रम्भे कामक्रोधजयैषिणम् ।
दशवर्षसहस्राणि शैली स्थास्यसि दुर्भगे ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,64,11.12.

He himself earlier succumbed to the allurement of Menakā who was equally sent by Indra. But it is however clear that the nymphs themselves were not quite sure of their success in spite of their great beauty and charm. Rambhā herself remonstrates with Indra, her hands clasped beseechingly, explaining the sage as most irascible and her survival from his anger almost impossible. So very much afraid was she:

अयं सुरपते घोरो विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः ।
क्रोधमुत्स्रक्ष्यते घोरं मयि देव न संशयः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,64,3

But in the case of Menakā which was earlier, Kauśika was himself allured by her unparalleled beauty like the lightning on the cloud, succumbed to cupid, and spoke to the nymph not only welcoming her to his hermitage but requesting her to favour him, so infatuated was he with her. When he realised his folly, however, as he had himself invited her, he spoke sweetly to her before he left, though even then she was quivering with fear. Viśvāmitra was indeed gracious. He only realised his folly and left for resuming and reinforcing his penance:

तां ददर्श महातेजा मेनकां कुशिकात्मजः ।
रुपेणाप्रतिमां तत्र विद्युतं जलदे यथा ॥
दृष्ट्वा कन्दर्पवशगो मुनिस्तामिदमब्रवीत् ।
अप्सरः स्वागतं तेऽस्तु वस चेह ममाश्रमे ॥
अनुगृह्णीष्व भंद्र ते मदनेन सुमोहितम् ।
इत्युक्ता सा वरारोहा तत्र वासमथाकरोत् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,63,5-7.

मेनकां मधुरैर्वाक्यैर्विसृज्य कुशिकात्मज: ।
उत्तरं पर्वतं राम विश्वामित्रो जगाम ह ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,63,13.

But the same Viśvāmitra once determined for self control, repents even for his cursing Rambhā, though he was not allured by her. He had still succumbed to his anger resulting in his pronouncing the curse. It was not only passion (*kāma*) but also anger (*krodha*) that was to be overcome, and controlling both, and becoming taciturn, uttering not a single word, he performed such severe penance for thousands of years, fasting all the while that, when finally about to break his fast, when Indra himself came in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa, gladly gave away to him, even the food that he sighted after ever so long, determined to continue his penance. So severe was his asceticism that there spurted a flaming smoky streak from his head which frightened the entire universe. Brahmā himself had to proclaim him *Brahmaṛishi* and even Vaśishṭha himself:

अथ वर्षसहस्रं वै नोच्छ्वसन्मुनिपुङ्गव: ।
तस्यानुच्छ्वसमानस्य मूर्ध्नि धूमो व्यजायत ॥
त्रैलोक्यं येन संभ्रान्तमदीपितमिवाभवत् ॥
तत: देवा: सगन्धर्वा: पन्नगोरगराक्षसा: ।
मोहितास्तेजसा तस्य तपसा मन्दरश्मय: ॥
तत: सुरगणा: सर्वे पितामहपुरोगमा: ।
विश्वामित्रं महात्मानं वाक्यं मधुरमब्रुवन् ॥
ब्रह्मर्षे स्वागतं तेऽस्तु तपसा स्म सुतोषिता: ।
ब्रह्मण्यं तपसोग्रेण प्राप्तवानसि कौशिक ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,65,7-9, 18-19.

It is no wonder that the earlier exploits, which Viśvāmitra alone could achieve, are recalled, like sending Triśanku to another heaven created by him afresh, the magnanimous saving of Śunaśśepa from the sacrificial pole for Varuṇa, the calling a halt to the allurements of Rambhā and others:

न खलु विश्वामित्रादृषेर्महत्त्वेन कश्चिदपर: प्रकृष्यते ।
यस्य भगवतस्त्रैशङ्कवं शौन:शेपं रम्भास्तम्भनं
चेत्यपरिमेयमाश्चर्यजातमास्यानविद आचक्षते, ॥

Mahāvīracharita 1

and the sage respectfully described as an additional fourth sacred fire, or a fifth to the known number of *Vedas*, or a great holy place on the move, or the very embodiment of Dharma itself:

तुरीयो ह्येष मेध्योऽग्निराम्नायः पञ्चमोऽथ वा।
अथ वा जङ्गमं तीर्थं धर्मो वा मूर्तिमान् चरः॥

Mahāvīracharita 1,10.

The tradition of the *Rāmayaṇa* shows that Brahmā and the celestials not only pronounced him *Brahmaṛishi* but endowed him with the highest *Brahmavidyā* that automatically dawned on him

प्रतिभास्यन्ति ते वेदा ब्रह्म चाव्ययमुत्तमम्।

Rāmāyaṇa 1,65,

And Bhavabhūti glorifies this in the remark that the sage that became the abode of the lustre of penance, not only obtained the highest supreme enlightenment, but was also prayed by Brahmā himself and the celestial sages to refrain from any further severe penance that looked almost enveloping:

तदस्मिन्ब्रह्मार्द्रं स्त्रिदशमुनिभिर्नार्थितशमे
तपस्तेजोधाम्नि स्वयमुपगतब्रह्मणि गुरौ।

Mahāvīracharita 1,11.

Viśvāmitra was like another Vaśishṭha, who could by the power of his penance know the great valour of Rāma and reassure Daśaratha (Fig. 38).

अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम्।
वशिष्ठोऽपि महातेजा येचेमे तपसि स्थिताः॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,19,14-15.

He could also, being so great a sage, assure Daśaratha that none except Rāma could takle Subāhu and Mārīcha (Fig. 39).

नच तौ राघवादन्यो हन्तुमुत्सहते पुमान्।
वीर्योत्सिक्तौ हि तौ पापौ कालपाशवशं गतौ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,19,12.

And Śatānanda, son of Gautama and Ahalyā and the royal priest of Janaka, narrates to Rāma the glory of Viśvāmitra and all of them watch spell-bound Rāma breaking the bow (Fig. 40).

Another example of a *ṛishi* who was seduced, is not by the allurement of the most charming celestial nymphs, but by shoals of fish in large troops of family moving along the waters of the river Yamunā in the deep bottom of which he was performing severe penance for twelve long years. This piscine family with its passionate attachment and the magnitude of its progeny so attracted the mind of Saubhari, a learned master of the *Ṛigveda*, that he resolved to enter the householder's life. Kālidāsa, in the context of the householder's life, remarks and not without an element of truth in it, that finding Śiva, the peak of self-control and the foremost of the detached, being inclined towards wedlock, the great sages born of Prajāpati shed whatever little that they may have had of shamefacedness regarding their householders' life:

तस्मिन् संयमिनामाद्ये जाते परिणयोन्मुखे ।
जह्नुः परिग्रहव्रीडां प्राजापत्यास्तपस्विनः ॥

Kumārasambhava 6,34

The attraction was so great and the desire to marry came up so prominent in his mind that, Saubhari, a sage of extraordinary powers of penance, came out of the Yamunā where he had done penance undistracted for twelve years to marry one of the daughters of the emperor Māndhātā of whom he asked one princess to be given to him in wedlock.

The emperor, judging the incompatibility of the aged sage and his young and resplendant daughters of celestial charm, yet afraid of the displeasure of the sage, asked him to marry any of his daughters that would agree, in the hope that his very looks would dissuade any of his daughters agreeing to such a request. But when he was conducted into the palace Saubhari appeared so handsome a young man to the princesses that all the fifty of them with one accord chose him as their husband, and the sage who had come for only one to be his companion in life as a householder, took all of them to wife to avoid disappointment to any of them. The king was astonished but he did not know the transformation of the *ṛishi* who to his eyes appeared in the same decrepitude.

In his natural affection and concern for his daughters whom he

had hoped to have a better fate in matrimony, he decided to pay them a visit to find out how they were reconciling to their fate. But where was the hermitage! There were as many palaces as there were princesses; and when he enquired apologetically of his eldest daughter, she gave him to know that she was perfectly happy with her young and beautiful husband in a heavenly mansion with smiling gardens and lakes though, however, as he never moved out of the palace, she was sorry for the rest of her sisters who were neglected. It was the same story with the second daughter and the third and all the rest. In fact, Saubhari by the power of his penance could transform himself not only into a youth but into as many forms as there were princesses. It should be remembered that Saubhari as a great sage was so powerful in asceticism, which sometimes transcends celestial powers, that he is the only other example besides Kṛishṇa in the *rāsa* sport, where he transformed himself into as many as there were *gopikās*. Here was this other, as many Saubharis as there were the daughters of Māndhātā. The story in the *Vishṇupurāṇa* is a glory of the power of penance. Yet here, the fish were enough to distract the mind of such a great sage, not to talk of Rambhā or Urvaśī or the Lord in the guise of Mohinī the temptress at whose feet grovelled even the greatest sages (Fig. 41).

बह्वृचश्च सौभरिर्नाम ऋषिरन्तर्जले द्वादशाब्दं कालमुवास। तत्र चान्तर्जले सम्मदनामातिबहुप्रजोऽतिप्रमाणो मीनाधिपतिरासीत्। तस्य पौत्रदौहित्राः पार्श्वतः पृष्ठतो वक्षःपुच्छशिरसां चोपरि भ्रमन्तस्तेन सहार्हनिशमतिनिर्वृता रेमिरे। स चापि तत्स्पर्शोपचीयमानहर्षप्रकर्षो बहुप्रकारं तस्यर्षेः पश्यतस्तैरात्मजपौत्रदौहित्रादिभिः सहानुदिवसं बहुप्रकारं रेमे। अथान्तर्जलावस्थितः स सौभरिरेकाग्रतासमाधानमपहायानुदिनं तत्तास्य मत्स्यस्यात्मजपौत्रदौहित्रादिभिः सहातिरमणीयं ललितमवेक्ष्याचिन्तयत्। अहो धन्योयमीदृशमप्यनभिमतं योन्यन्तरमप्यवाप्यैभिरात्मजपौत्रादिभिः सह रममाणोऽतीवास्माकं स्पृहामुत्पादयति। वयमप्येवं पुत्रादिभिः सह रमयिष्यामः। इत्येवमभिसमीक्ष्य स तस्मादन्तर्जलान्निष्क्रम्य निर्वेष्टुकामः कन्यार्थं मान्धातारं राजानमगच्छत्। आगमनश्रवणसमनन्तरं चोत्थाय तेन राज्ञा सम्यगर्घादिना पूजितः कृतासनपरिग्रहः सौभरिरुवाच। निर्वेष्टुकामोस्मि नरेन्द्र कन्यां प्रयच्छ मे मा प्रणयं विभांक्षीः। न ह्यर्थिनः कार्यवशाभ्युपेताः ककुत्स्थगोत्रे विमुखाः प्रयान्ति। अन्येपि सन्त्येव नृपाः पृथिव्यां क्ष्मापाल येषां तनयाः प्रसूताः। किं त्वर्थिनामर्थितदानदीक्षाकृतव्रतं श्लाघ्यमिदं कुलं ते।

शतार्धसंख्यास्तव सन्ति कन्या तासां ममैका नृपते प्रयच्छ।
यत्प्रार्थनाभङ्गभयाद्विभेमि तस्मादहं राजवरातिदुःखात्॥

इति ऋषिवचनमाकर्ण्य स राजा जराजर्जरितदेहं तमृषिमालोक्य प्रत्याख्यानकातरस्तस्माच्च

भगवतः शापतो विभ्यर्तिकंचिदधोमुखश्चिरं दध्यौ·····भगवन्नस्मत्कुलस्थितिरियं य एव कन्ययाभिरुचितोऽभिजनवान् वरस्तस्मै कन्या प्रदीयते। भगवद्वाञ्छास्मन्मनोरथानामप्यगोचरवर्तिनी कथमप्येषा संजाता तदेवमवस्थितेन विद्मः किं कुर्म इति तन्मया चिन्त्यत इत्यभिहिते तेन भूभुजा मुनिरचिन्तयत्। अहो अयमन्योऽस्मत्प्रत्याख्यानोपायः, वृद्धोयमनभिमतः स्त्रीणां किमुत कन्यानामित्यमुना संचिन्त्यैवमभिहितम्। एवमस्तु, तथा करिष्यामीति संचिन्त्य मान्धातारमुवाच। यद्येवं तदादिश्यतामस्माकं प्रवेशाय कन्यान्तःपुरवर्षवरः। यदि कन्यैव काचिन्मां नाभिलषति तदाहं दारसंग्रहं करिष्यामीत्यन्यथा चेत्तदलमस्माकमेतेनातीतकालारम्भेनेत्युक्त्वा विरराम। ततश्च मान्धात्रा मुनिशापशङ्कितेन कन्यान्तःपुरवर्षवरः समाज्ञप्तः। कन्यान्तःपुरं प्रविशन्नेव भगवानखिलसिद्धगन्धर्वमनुष्येभ्योतिशयेन कमनीयं रूपमकरोत्। प्रवेश्य च तमृषिमन्तःपुरे वर्षवरस्ताः कन्याः प्राह। भवतीनां जनयिता महाराजः समाज्ञापयति। स्वयमस्मान् ब्रह्मर्षिः कन्यार्थी समभ्यागतो मया चास्य प्रतिज्ञातं यद्यस्मत्कन्यका काचिद्भवन्तं वरयति तत्कन्याया छन्देनाहं परिपन्थानं करिष्यामीत्याकर्ण्य सर्वा एव ताः कन्याः सानुरागं समन्मथाः करेणव इवेभयूथपतिं तमृषिमहमहमिकया वरयांबभूवुः।.....कृतानुरूपविवाहश्च महर्षिः सकलास्ताः कन्यकाः स्वमाश्रममनयत्। तत्र चाशेषशिल्पप्रणेतारं विधातारमिवान्यं विश्वकर्माणमाहूय सकलकन्यानामेकैकस्याः प्रोत्फुल्लपङ्कजकूजत्कलहंसकारण्डवादिविहंगमाभिरामजलाशयाः सोपवनाः सावकाशाः साधुशय्यासनपरिच्छदः प्रासादाः क्रियन्तामित्यादिदेश। तच्च तथैवानुष्ठितमशेषशिल्पविशेषाचार्यस्त्वष्टा दर्शितवान्। ततश्च परमर्षिणा सौभरिणाज्ञप्तस्तेषु गृहेष्वनपायी नन्दनामा महानिधिरासांचक्रे। ततोऽनवरतभक्ष्यभोज्यलेह्यादुपभोगैरागतानुगतभृत्यादीनहर्निशमशेषगृहेषु ताः क्षितीशदुहितरो भोजयामासुः। एकदा तु दुहितृस्नेहाकृष्टहृदयः स महीपतिरतिदुःखितास्ताः सुखिता वा इति विचिंत्य तस्य महर्षेराश्रममुपेत्य स्फुरदंशुमालां स्फटिकमयीं प्रासादमालामतिरम्योपवनजलाशयां ददर्श। प्रविश्य चैकं प्रासादमात्मजां परिष्वज्य कृतासनपरिग्रहः प्रवृत्तस्नेहनयानाम्बुगर्भनयनोऽब्रवीत्। अय्यत्र वत्से भवत्याः सुखमुत किंचिदसुखम्। अपि ते महर्षिः स्नेहवानुत संस्मर्यतेऽस्मद्गृहवासस्येत्युक्ता तनयापि पितरमाह। तातातिशयरमणीयः प्रासादोऽत्रातिमनोज्ञमुपवनमतिकलवाक्यविहगाभिरुताः प्रोत्फुल्लपद्माकरजलाशयाः। मनोनुकूलभक्ष्यभोज्यानुलेपनवस्त्रभूषणादिभोगमृदूनि शयनानि सर्वसंपत्समवेतमेतद्गार्हस्थ्यम्। तथापि केन वा जन्मभूमिर्न स्मर्यते। त्वत्प्रसादादिदमशेषशोभनम्। किं त्वेतन्ममैकं दुःखकारणं यदस्मद्भर्तास्मद्गृहान्न निष्कामति। ममैव केवलमतिप्रीत्या समीपवर्ती नान्यासां मम भगिनीनाम्। एवं च मम सहोदर्यो दुःखिता इत्येवमतिदुःखकारणमित्युक्तस्तया द्वितीयं प्रासादमुपेत्य स्वतनयां परिष्वज्योपविष्टस्तथैव पृष्टवान्। तयापि तथैव सर्वमेतत्प्रासादाद्युपभोगसुखमाख्यातम्। ममैव केवलं पार्श्ववर्ती नास्मद्भगिनीनामित्येवमादि श्रुत्वा समस्तप्रासादेषु राजा प्रविवेश तनयां तनयां तथैवापृच्छत्ताभिश्च तथैवाभिहितः परितोषविस्मयनीयनिर्भरविवशहृदयो भगवन्तं सौभरिं एकांतावस्थितमुपेत्य कृतपूजोऽब्रवीत्। दृष्टस्ते भगवन सुमहानेष सिद्धिप्रभावो नैवंविधमन्यस्य कस्यचिदस्माभिर्विभूतिविलसितमुपलक्षितम्।

Vishṇupurāṇa 4,2,20-41

After so long Saubhari realised what a fall it was for him that he should have been attracted into the snare of life of the family. The company of fishes had made him passionate like fish. A motif of merman as a sage is the sculptor's interpretation of the theme (Fig. 42). How sad this completely enveloping delusion of mind. How can

there be the end of disaster in millions of years or in billions, and as desires get satisfied new desires rise up. Till death snatches, desires continue. For one deluded by desires there is no concentration on the Almighty. For him who was contemplating entirely on God in the depth of the waters, this delusion had come by the company of the fishes. This married life of his had come only because of this. The greatest impediments are born of passion. By association with the fish he had developed a passion for children and grand-children and thus deceived himself. The verse that he uttered reflecting on this is an oft-quoted famous one. For the ascetics the way to salvation is to avoid company. By getting into company, there are so many endless blemishes created. Even one who has gone high up in the scale of meditation falls very low down even when he is an ascetic with self control just because of avoidable company. How much more is the effect of this on one with undeveloped insight. He resolved to so act thereafter that with his blemishes washed off and with them the misery as well, he should become blissful shedding all sorrow, and to take refuge in Vishṇu beyond Whom there is nothing higher, Who is the highest among the high, the greatest of the great:

अहो मोहस्यातिविस्तरः ।
मनोरथानां न समाप्तिरस्ति वर्षायुतेनापि तथाब्दलक्षैः ।
पूर्णेषु पूर्णेषु पुनर्नवानामुत्पत्तयः सन्ति मनोरथानाम् ।।.....
अमृत्युतो नैव मनोरथानामन्तोस्ति विज्ञातमिदं मयाद्य ।
मनोरथासक्तिपरस्य चित्तं न जायते वै परमात्मसङ्गि ।।
स मे समाधिर्जलवासमात्रे मत्स्यस्य सङ्गात्सहसैव नष्टः ।
परिग्रहः सङ्गकृतो ममायं परिग्रहोत्थश्च महाविधित्साः ।।
निःसङ्गता मुक्तिपदं यतीनां सङ्गादशेषाः प्रभवन्ति दोषाः ।
आरूढयोगोऽपि निपात्यतेधः सङ्गेन योगी किमुतालपबुद्धिः ।।.....
यथा हि भूयः परिहीनदोषो जनस्य दुःखैर्भविता न दुःखी ।.....
यस्मान्न किं चित्तमहं गुरूणां परं गुरुं संश्रयमेमि विष्णुम् ।.....

Vishṇupurāṇa 4,2,44,47,48,52,53,56.

As Rāma moves on in the forest towards the hermitage of Agastya, he is suddenly attracted by celestial music and enquires how it was issuing from a near by large lotus lake with fragrant blooming flowers, though no one was in sight to create that melody. Wondering Rāma and Lakshmaṇa enquire of one of the sages, Dharmabhṛita,

whence this music arose. He learns from him that the lake itself is called Pañchāpsara and an eternally pleasant one created by the power of penance of the sage Māṇḍakarṇī. Here he had performed severe penance subsisting only on air for thousands of years from amidst the waters. The penance was so severe that Agni and all the other *devas* were bewildered and sent the topmost nymphs of the celestial sphere to distract him. These five nymphs Pañchāpsaras, agile in movement, golden-hued, slim and like the very lightning in lustre, so attracted the cupidity of the sage that they became his wives, and in this very lake, in the mansions underneath created by him, the sage lives the utmost pleasant life in eternal sport, listening to the heavenly music and dance of the nymphs and the tinkling of the waist zones and anklets (Fig. 43). That is Māṇḍakarṇī a sage who could also be attracted by physical charm and melody, even as Kālidāsa says:

रम्यणि वीक्ष्य मधुरांश्य निशम्य शब्दान्
पर्युत्सुखी भवति यत्सुखितोऽपि जन्तुः ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 5.2.

इदं पञ्चाप्सरो नाम तटाकं सर्वकालिकम ।
निर्मितं तपसा राम मुनिना माण्डकर्णिना ॥
स हि तेपे तपस्तीव्रं माण्डकर्णिर्महामुनिः ।
दश वर्षसहस्राणि वायुभक्षो जलाश्रयः ॥
ततः प्रव्यथिताः सर्वे देवाः साग्निपुरोगमाः ।
अब्रुवन् वचनं सर्वे परस्परसमागताः ॥
अस्माकं कस्य चित्स्थानमेष प्रार्थयते मुनिः ।
इति संविग्नमनसः सर्वे ते त्रिदिवौकसः ॥
तत्र कर्तुं तपोविघ्नं देवैः सर्वैर्नियोजिताः ।
प्रधानाप्सरसः पञ्च विद्युच्चलितवर्चसः ॥
अप्सरोभिस्ततस्ताभिर्मुनिर्दृष्टपरावरः ।
नीतो मदनवश्यत्वं सुराणां कार्यसिद्धये ॥
ताश्चैवाप्सरसः पञ्च मुनेः पत्नीत्वमागताः ।
तटाके निर्मितं तासामस्मिन्नन्तर्हितं गृहम् ॥
तथैवाप्सरसो पञ्च निवसन्त्यो यथासुखम् ।
रमयन्ति तपोयोगान्मुनिं यौवनमास्थितम् ॥

तासां संक्रीडमानानामेष वादित्रनिःस्वनः ।
श्रूयते भूषणोन्मिश्रो गीतशब्दो मनोहरः ॥
आश्चर्यमिति तस्यैतद्वचनं भावितात्मनः ।

Rāmāyaṇa 3,11,11-20.

There are various readings of the name Māṇḍakarṇī. It is spelt Sātakarṇī as well as Māṇḍakarṇī in addition to Maṇḍakarṇī. Rāma pointedly draws the attention of Sītā to this lake where sports the sage Sātakarṇī, and the peaceful penance grove of that great sage, as Rāma remarks in a very meaningful way, is like the disc of the moon only slightly visible from among the clouds, which is as much as to say that the lustrous sage Māṇḍakarṇī, with a heart so kind and cool like the moon, was clouded as it were and his lustre almost effaced by the cloudlike nymphs that surrounded and almost drowned him, enslaved him literally in that lake named after the Pañchāpsara:

एतन्मुनेर्मानिमि सातकर्णेः पञ्चाप्सरो नाम विहारवरि ।
आभाति पर्यन्तवनं विदूरान्मेघान्तरालक्ष्यमिवेन्दुबिम्बम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,38.

Rāma also explains what a great sage and what severe penance meant Sātakarṇī. Long ago with only the tips of the blades of grass as his sustenance like the deer around him, he was engaged in penance, and Indra frightened by his deep meditation, contrived a tricky snare for him in the youth and beauty of the sight of the best of the celestial nymphs:

पुरा स दर्भाङ्कुरमात्रवृत्तिश्चरन्मृगैः सार्धमृषिर्मधोना ।
समाधिभीतेन किलोपनीतः पञ्चाप्सरोयौवनकूटबन्धम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,39

To recall immediately the memory of Sītā of the heavenly music once heard, Rāma repeats, that the sound of the drum indicating the progress of music from the abode of the sage in the palace underneath the lake creates echoes for a moment in the windows of the balcony of their aerial car moving in the sky so high above reaching even this distance in all its clarity of sweet melody:

तस्यायमन्तर्हितसौधभाजः प्रसक्तसङ्गीतमृदङ्गघोषः ।
वियद्गतः पुष्पकचन्द्रशालाः क्षणं प्रतिश्रुन्मुखराः करोति ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 13,40.

Rishyaśṛiṅga, the innocent hermit boy, son of Vibhaṇḍaka, is a classical instance of a sage who never knew what was a woman. His father had brought him up so in his hermitage far away from where any woman could reach, with only the deer around him as his companions, the only human he knew being his father. He had no idea of any except a sage in penance that his father was. He could never know that there was a king, people in and around villages and towns in various professions, householders, women and children, and those young in age and advanced in years. All that he knew was there could be sages as he had anyway seen an example in his father. Vibhaṇḍaka was a tremendous sage of great potency whose only ideal was to bring up his son in the utmost *brahmacharya*. When there was a drought in Kaliṅga, it was told the king that if the immaculate hermit boy Rishyaśṛiṅga was brought to his realm, immediately on his setting foot on the soil there would be a downpour. But how to entice him was the question! A number of beautiful damsels clever in alluring were sent to the hermitage of the *ṛishi* Vibhaṇḍaka so far away when the great sage was away.

The young hermit boy who had never seen a boat, the vehicle used by them for their journey, nor tasted sweet balls such as they brought except the fruit he was accustomed to, nor costly silken dress and jewellery as bedecked them, took them to be a different type of hermits, wearing a different variety of bark garments, lacking the long beards and matted locks which differed in their appearance as decked and braided hair, and all the time believed they were sages, only of a different type, but nevertheless only sages. The innocent narration of one of the new types of sages that Rishyaśṛiṅga describes vividly to his father, when he questions him if any sage had arrived at his hermitage, is indeed a perfect example of pure innocence and complete faith in only sages as having existence in the world, yet with a peculiar wonder that there could be such lovely sages as well. He narrates thus.

Here came a *brahmachārī* with peculiar *jaṭās*, neither short nor tall, golden-hued, eyes wide like lotus petal, shining like a celestial, ever so aesthetically complete, lustrous like the sun, fair but with blue eyes of deep iridescence, his hair dark, long, perfumed and plaited

with golden threads. On his neck, there is something of striking wonder, shining like lightning in the sky. Just below his neck, there is a pair of globular limbs devoid of hair growth, the waist so narrow near the navel but the hip far larger than normal size, and from under his transparent garment, there is a waist zone like mine but only golden. There is something more of a wonder about him that on his ankle there are objects that tinkle and on the hands are tied lovely objects somewhat like my rosary, like the swans singing in the waters in delight. There is sweet resounding as they move with the rustling of their garment looking so beautiful and not so simple and colourless as mine. His face is indeed inviting and so wonderful to see and his speech gladdens the heart like the cooing of the cuckoo, and my heart leaps up as I listen to him, like the gentle rustle of the breeze as in spring in the forest. There is an aroma and fragrance around him as he moves wafted ever so softly by the gentle wind. His locks are specially dressed up, divided into two by a line on the forehead, and the ears are decked with circular objects like Chakravāka birds looking ever so lovely. And what a lovely wondrous fruit he carries in his right hand, which, thrown on the ground over and over again bounces higher and higher up creating a wonder indeed:

इहागतो जटिलो ब्रह्मचारी न वै ह्रस्वो नतिदीर्घो मनस्वी ।
सुवर्णवर्णः कमलायताक्षः श्वेतः सुराणामिव शोभमानः ॥
समृद्धरुपः सवितेव दीप्तः सुश्लक्ष्णकृष्णाक्षिरतीव गौरः ।
नीलाः प्रसन्नाश्च जटाः सुगन्धा हिरण्यरज्जुग्रथिताः सुदीर्घाः ॥
आश्चर्यरूपा पुनरस्य कण्ठे विभ्राजते विद्युदिवान्तरिक्षे ।
द्वौ चास्य पिण्डावधरेण कण्ठादजातरोमौ सुमनोहरौ च ॥
विलग्नमध्यश्च स नाभिदेशः कटिश्च तस्यातिकृशप्रमाणः ।
तथास्य चीरान्तरतः प्रभाति हिरण्मयी मेखला मे यथेयम् ॥
अन्यच्च तस्याद्भुतदर्शनीयं विकूजितं पादयोः संप्रभाति ।
पाण्योश्च तद्वत्स्वनवन्निबद्धौ कलापकावक्षमाला यथेयम् ॥
विचेष्टमानस्य च तस्य तानि कूजन्ति हंसाः सरसीव मत्ताः ।
चीराणि तस्याद्भुतदर्शनानि नेमानि तद्वन्मम रूपवन्ति ॥
वक्त्रं च तस्याद्भुतदर्शनीयं प्रव्याहृतं ह्लादयतीव चेतः ।
पुंस्कोकिलस्येव च तस्य वाणी तं शृण्वतो मे व्यथितोऽन्तरात्मा ॥
यथा वनं माधवमासि मध्ये समीरितं श्वसनेनेव भाति ।
तथा स भात्युत्तमपुण्यगन्धि निषेव्यमानः पवनेन तात ॥

सुसंयताश्चापि जटा विभक्ता द्वैधीकृता नातिसमा ललाटे ।
कर्णौ च चित्रैरिव चक्रवाकैः समावृतौ यस्य सरूपवद्भिः ॥
तथा फलं वृत्तमथो विचित्रं समाहरत्पाणिना दक्षिणेन ।
तद्भूमिमासाद्य पुनः पुनश्च समुत्पतत्यद्भुतरूपमुच्चैः ॥

Mahābhārata 3,112,1-10.

And invited by them innocently he accompanied them; and when he arrived in Aṅga, the kingdom of Lomapāda, there was a regular downpour after twelve years of complete drought. That was the greatness of Ṛishyaśṛiṅga:

ऋष्यशृङ्गः सुतो यस्य तपस्वी संयतेन्द्रियः ।
तपसो यः प्रभावेन वर्षयामास वासवम् ॥
अनावृष्ट्यां भयाद्यस्य ववर्ष बलवृत्रहा ।

Mahābhārata 3,110,23-24.

The king offered the princess Śāntā, the daughter of his friend Daśaratha, whom he had adopted as his daughter, and was thus the elder sister of Rāma.

Ṛishyaśṛiṅga was so called as he had a deer's horn on his head and was innocent like the deer:

तस्यर्षेः शृङ्गं शिरसि राजन्नासीन्महात्मनः ।
तेनर्ष्यशृङ्ग इत्येवं तदा स प्रथितोऽभवत् ॥

Mahābhārata 3,110,39.

He himself was born of a doe that died soon after child-birth, a transformed celestial nymph that lapped up the semen of sage Vibhaṇḍaka whose severe penance in mid-stream was caused to be distracted through Urvaśī. And the kindly sage Vibhaṇḍaka brought up this his son with great affection:

महाह्रदं समासाद्य काश्यपस्तपसि स्थितः ।.....
तस्य रेतः प्रचस्कन्द दृष्ट्वाप्सरसमूर्वशीम् ॥.....
सह तोयेन तृषिता मृगी तच्चापिवत्तदा ।.....
देवकन्या मृगी भूत्वा मुनिं सूय विमोक्षिता ॥.....
तस्यां मृग्यां समभवत्तस्य पुत्रो महामुनिः ।
ऋष्यशृङ्गस्तपोनित्यो वन एवाभ्यवर्तत ॥

Mahābhārata 3,110,34,39

It is not exactly in this case an enticement, mind tarnished by the allurement of a woman, but in pure innocence and affection for a new type of sages who became his friends as he thought. He came into the city, and slowly learnt the nature of the world itself, and entered the householder's life. It is he that performed the great sacrifice *Putrakāmeshṭi* for Daśaratha and it is by the grace of Rishyaśṛiṅga that the four mighty sons were born to Daśaratha (Fig. 44):

प्राप्ताः कृच्छ्रादृष्यश्रृङ्गोपचारैः पुण्यश्लोकाः कोसलेन्द्रस्य पुत्राः ॥

Mahāvīracharita 1,24.

An excellent sculpture of the Kushāṇa period of the first century A. D. in the Mathurā Museum (Fig. 45) represents the young Rishyaśṛiṅga with the horn on his head:

ऋष्यश्रृङ्गो वनचरस्तपःस्वाध्यायतत्परः ।
अनभिज्ञः स नारीणां विषयानां सुखस्य च ॥
इन्द्रियार्थैरभिमतैर्नरचित्तप्रमाथिभिः ।
पुरमानाययिष्यामः क्षिप्रं चाध्यवसीयताम् ॥
गणिकास्तत्र गच्छन्तु रूपवत्यः स्वलङ्कृताः ।
प्रलोभ्य विविधोपायैरानेष्यन्तीह सत्कृताः ॥
श्रुत्वा तथेति राजा च प्रत्युवाच पुरोहितम् ।.....
पितुः स नित्यसंतुष्टो नातिचक्राम चाश्रमात् ॥
न तेन जन्मप्रभृति दृष्ठपूर्वं तपस्विषु ॥
स्त्री वा पुमान्वा यच्चान्यत्सर्वं नगरराष्ट्रकम् ।.....
ताश्चित्रवेषा प्रमदा गायन्त्यो मधुरस्वनाः ।
ऋषिपुत्रमुपागम्य सर्वा वचनमब्रुवन् ॥
कस्त्वं किं वर्तसे ब्रह्मन् ज्ञातुमिच्छामहे वयम् ।.....
हार्दात्तस्य मतिर्जाता ह्याख्यातुं पितरं स्वकम् ।
पिता विभण्डकोऽस्माकं तस्याहं सुत औरसः ॥
ऋष्यश्रृङ्ग इति ख्यातं नाम कर्म च मे भुवि ।
इहाश्रमपदेऽस्माकं समीपे शुभदर्शनाः ॥
करिष्ये वोऽत्र पूजां वै सर्वेषां विधिपूर्वकम् ।.....
प्रतिगृह्य तु तां पूजां सर्वा एव समुत्सुकाः ॥
ऋषेर्भीतास्तु शीघ्रं ता गमनाय मतिं दधुः ।
अस्माकमपि मुख्यानि फलानीमानि वै द्विज ॥
गृहाण प्रति भद्रं ते भक्षयस्व च मा चिरम् ।
ततस्तास्तं ममालिंग्य सर्वा हर्षसमन्विताः ॥

मोदकान्प्रददुस्तस्मै भक्ष्यांश्च विविधान्शुभान् ।
तानि चास्वाद्य तेजस्वी फलानीति च मन्यते ॥
अनास्वादितपूर्वाणि वने नित्यनिवासिनाम् । .....
उपसृत्य ततः सर्वास्तास्तमूचुरिद वचः ॥
एह्याश्रमपदं सौम्य ह्यस्माकमिति चाब्रुवन् ।
चित्राण्यत्र बहूनि स्युर्मूलानि च फलानि च ॥.....
श्रुत्वा तु वचन तासा सर्वासां हृदयंगमम् ॥
गमनाय मतिं चक्रे तं च नित्युस्तदा स्त्रियः ।
तत्र चानीयमाने तु विप्रे तस्मिन्महात्मनि ॥
ववर्ष सहसा देवो जगत्प्रह्लायंस्तदा ।
वर्षेणैवागतं विप्रं विषयं स्वं नराधिपः ॥
प्रत्युद्गम्य मुनिं प्रह्वः शिरसा च मंही गतः ।
अर्घ्यं च प्रददौ तस्मै न्यायतः सुसमाहितः ॥
अन्तःपुर प्रवेश्यास्मै कन्यां दत्वा यथाविधि ।
शान्तां शान्तेन मनसा राजा हर्षमवाप सः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,10,3-6,9-12,14-21,26-34.

This story as well as of the *rājaṛishi* Bharata who developed inordinate affection for a deer are the inspirers of a *Jātaka* illustrated in a medallion from Bhārhut of the second century B.C. (Fig. 46) where the miraculous birth of a child of a doe and kindly picked up for being reared by a sage is vividly presented.

The mind is such a subtle and fickle one that it is most difficult to control it. The *ṛishis* are great because they could control this most difficult of sensory organs. With the mind in contact with each of the receptive organs, one sees, hears, inhales, touches or tastes, and the experience is complete. But when the mind is not in contact and receptive, one may see but yet be oblivious of the vision, be attentive but yet fail to comprehend, smell but miss the fragrance, touch and yet be unaware, eat but yet miss the taste. But it also happens that the slightest giving in would mean an upperhand for the mind and the fall of the meditator who had so far conquered the mind. When Mandodarī weeps over the corpse of Rāvaṇa, she rightly says he once conquered all the *indriyas* and was great; but later he gave himself up to those very ones that were under his control, and that was the beginning of his fall. You conquered the three worlds, when you conquered your sensory organs long ago; as if recalling that

inimical attitude towards them, they have now completely triumphed over you:

इन्द्रियाणि पुरा जित्वा जितं त्रिभुवनं पुरा।
स्मरद्भिरिव तद्वैरमिन्द्रियैरेव निर्जितः॥

Rāmāyaṇa 6,114,18.

Bharata, a great king (*rājaṛishi*) who was more a sage than a ruler like Janaka, who ruled from his capital Sālagrāma, was always in meditation like Indradyumna of the Gajendramoksha story, ever thinking of Vāsudeva and constantly uttering the famous verse so often quoted giving the glorious names of Vishṇu

यज्ञेशाच्युत गोविन्द माधवानन्त केशव।
कृष्ण विष्णो हृषीकेशेत्याहरन्नास केवलम्॥

There was no one who was his enemy even in a dream as he could think of none other in thought than the Almighty. His greatest delight was to himself gather the most fragrant flowers, resplendant green *kuśa* grass to offer them in worship. He always avoided undesirable company and was an ascetic for all purposes.

Once he had gone for a bath to the river Mahānadī, and just as he finished his ablutions, he found a pregnant doe from the neighbouring forest come to quench her thirst. As she was just finishing lapping up the water there was a fearful roar of a lion. In fear she jumped up to run when the foetus fell into the water and was rapidly carried by the current. The kind-hearted king caught the young one from the foetus and saved it, even as the doe, in her fear, excitement and grief in losing her young one, died on the spot. The king now decided to bring up the young one and took it to his hermitage. He reared it tenderly with great affection feeding it carefully as if it were a little child. This little fawn would move about the hermitage without fear from any, being quite unafraid. It would even go a little distance and return in the evening and be back in the courtyard of the simple dwelling of the sage. The mind of the sage was so attached to this little animal that when it was away, it had its own misgivings and worry took the place of tranquility and peace. A great king, who had given up his empire, queens and sons, all his people and all the regal glory with the highest spirit of renunciation,

now developed a sense of possession in this young frisking fawn. When there was any delay in its return, his anxiety was always whether it would have been eaten up by wolves. He would love to be scratched with the little growing horns of the young one, and in a hundred ways wondered how it would respond to him with such love.

This indeed was the cause of the break in his meditation and his spiritual uplift. At last, when at the time of his departure from the world, the deer looked at him as towards a father with tears in his eyes, and the sage also reciprocated with no other thought except his love for the deer, was reborn a deer in a forest, with this difference that he could remember his past (*jātismara*). This helped him to atone for his mistake and, even as an animal, he just tasted only dry leaves or grass and that too only the minimum to kėep the body alive, and even as an animal practised such asceticism, that in his next birth he was born a learned Brāhmaṇa in a very devoted and religious family. He was full of all the highest knowledge of the *śāstras* and *mahāvidyā* and having attained supreme knowledge, he saw the Almighty in all. As a great *advaitin* he made no difference between one or the other, and his mind was unaffected by any idea of differences. He would not study when put to school, and when he had the *upanayana saṁskāra*, he had no need to study the *Veda* either. He neglected ritual. He would not discuss *śāstrārtha.* Even when spoken to, he would just reply in one or two words, and for all appearances looked a dullard. He cared very little for his body either, of which he scarcely took any notice, and his clothes were not as clean as they were expected to be. The more sophisticated citizens avoided him as a complete rustic. He was just this because outside attention on him would distract his meditation. When neglected by the world, the real *yogi* attains the highest of flights in *yoga.* This is the direction of Brahmā Hiraṇyagarbha himself which he followed meticulously. To the outer world he appeared a fool, depraved in mind. He would eat anything and care little for taste. He did not require food in quantity or quality either. On the death of his father, his brothers and other kin put him on agricultural work, and just fed him in return. He looked boorish, fat, rather slow in his work, but whoever wanted his help, he gave it freely, and people

preferred him as there was nothing to be paid to him as wages except a little food offered.

The charioteer of the Sauvīra king found him excellently suited by appearance to be one of the palanquin-bearers and put him on that. The king was hurrying to meet Kapila, the great sage, to enquire of him what was the greatest good for him in life. Without a demur, he joined the palanquin bearers and bore the vehicle; but unaccustomed to it, he could not proceed as quickly as the others and in fact hampered their progress. The king finding the palanquin jogging along unevenly, enquired the reason and found that there was this new bearer that caused it. The king enquired of him, how being fat and able-bodied, it was surprising that within even such a short tramping he had developed probably fatigue, which he could not imagine was possible. The reply given by this great sage amazed the king. I am neither fat nor fatigued; neither am I carrying the palanquin nor you riding it. All this is a mere figment of your imagination. The feet carry the legs which support the thighs, and they the stomach, that in turn holds the neck and head. On this rests the object and the object moves on with you in it. Where is the question of my carrying? or my being fat or slim, fatigued or fresh. You imagine we are the litter carriers and you the king. Analyse your body, amalgum of head, shoulders, hands and legs, single them out and call them as such: are you then really a king in a palanquin. After all you are up on a tree having climbed it, rather on a mass of timber. Nobody who sees you would say that the king is on a tree or on timber. It is a combination of parts of timber that assumes the name palanquin. But is it the palanquin? All these questions put to the king created such wonder in him that he dismounted immediately, fell at his feet, begged pardon of him for having so insulted him, and told him the purpose of his journey to the great sage Kapila, the incarnation of the Almighty himself, to enquire what was the very best for him. Bharata reassured him that there was no insult, that their mutual talk meant nothing, as ultimately there was only One undivided, and That was the only One worth thinking about. He assured him that all that was considered the best was ephemeral and ultimately caused only loss and decay; kingdom, treasures, beauty, enjoyment, power, nothing was permanent; so how could

any of these be the highest? He also pointed out that people worshiped God in many ways with a desire for this or that which ultimately landed them only in a momentary evanescent joy that however had its terminus in ultimate sorrow. The highest and the noblest was to avoid all these. Meditation on the Supreme and oneness with Him meant supreme bliss and *śānti*. This is the great precept of the sage Ribhu whose words of wisdom are the most precious pearls in the universe of intellect. The story of Bharata as narrated in the *Vishṇu-purāṇa*, how he pretended to be a dullard (*jaḍa*), a lunatic or a half-wit, though endowed with the highest knowledge, all for complete concentration on the Almighty, so that he would not again descend as he earlier did by his attachment to the deer has, several other instances and a medallion from Bhārhut illustrates the *Mūgapakka Jātaka* (Fig. 47) where a prince pretends to be deaf and dumb to escape princely vanities.

भरतः स महीपालः सालग्रामेऽवसत्किल ।
योगयुक्तः समाध्या च वासुदेवसदामनः ॥.....
यज्ञेशाच्युत गोविन्द माधवानन्त केशव ।
कृष्ण विष्णो हृषीकेशेत्याह राजा स केवलम् ॥.....
समित्पुष्पकुशादानं चक्रे देवक्रियाकृते ।
नान्यानि चक्रे कर्माणि निःसङ्गो योगतापसः ॥
जगाम सोऽभिषेकार्थमेकदा तु महानदीम् ।
सस्नौ तत्र तदा चक्रे स्नानस्यानन्तरक्रियाः ॥
अथाजगाम तत्तीर्थं जलं पातुं पिपासिता ।
आसन्नप्रसवा ब्रह्मन्नेकैव हरिणी वनात् ॥
ततः समभवत्तत्र पीतप्राये जले तया ।
सिंहस्य नादः सुमहान् सर्वप्राणिभयङ्करः ॥
ततः सा सहसा त्रासादाप्लुता निम्नगातटम् ।
अत्युच्चरोहणेनास्या नद्यां गर्भः पपात सः ॥.....
जग्राह स नृपो गर्भात्पतितां मृगपोतिकाम् ।.....
हरिणीं तां विलोक्याथ विपन्नां नृपतापसः ।
मृगपोतं समादाय पुनराश्रममागतः ।
पोषणं पुष्यमाणश्च स तेन ववृधे मुने ।.....
प्रातर्गत्वातिदूरं च सायमायात्तथाश्रमम् ।
पुनश्च भरतस्याभूदाश्रमस्योटजाजिरे ॥.....
किं वृकैर्भक्षितो व्याघ्रैः किं सिंहेन निपातितः ।
चिरायमाने निष्क्रान्ते तस्यासीदिति मानसम् ॥.....

समाधिभङ्गस्तस्यासीत्तन्मयत्वादृतात्मनः ।
संत्यक्तराज्यभोगर्धिस्वजनस्यापि भूपतेः ॥.....
पितेव सास्रं पुत्रेण मृगपोतेन वीक्षितः ।
मृगमेव तदाद्राक्षीत्त्यजन्प्राणानसावपि ॥
तन्मयत्वेन मैत्रेय नान्यत्किंचिदचिंतयत् ।.....
जम्बूमार्गे महारण्ये जज्ञे जातिस्मरो मृगः ।
जातिस्मरत्वादुद्विग्नः संसारस्य द्विजोत्तम ॥
विहाय मातरं सोथ सालग्राममुपाययौ ।
शुष्कैस्त्रिणैस्तथा पत्रैः स कुर्वन्नात्मपोषणम् ॥
मृगत्वहेतुभूतस्य कर्मणो निष्कृतिं ययौ ।
तत्र चोत्सृष्टदेहोऽसौ जज्ञे जातिस्मरो द्विजः ॥
सदाचारवतां शुद्धे योगिनां प्रवरे कुले ।
सर्वविज्ञानसंपन्नः सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्ववित् ॥
अपश्यत्स च मैत्रेय आत्मानं प्रकृतेः परम् ।.....
सारभूतान्यभेदेन ददर्श स महामतिः ।
न पपाठ गुरुप्रोक्तं कृतोपनयनः श्रुतम् ॥
न ददर्श च कर्माणि शास्त्राणि जगृहे न च ।
उक्तोऽपि बहुशः किंचिज्जडं वाक्यमभाषत ॥.....
अपध्वस्तवपुः सोऽथ मलिनाम्बरधृग्द्विजः ।
क्लिन्नदन्तान्तरः सर्वैः परिभूतः स नागरैः ॥.....
भुङ्क्ते कुल्माषवट्यादि शाकं वन्यफलं कणान् ।
यद्यदाप्नोति सुबहु तदन्ते कालसंयमम् ॥
पितुर्यु परते सोऽथ भ्रातृभ्रातृव्यबान्धवैः ।
कारितः क्षेत्रकर्मादिकदन्नाहारपोषितः ॥.....
तं तादृशमसंस्कारं विप्राकृतिविचेष्टितम् ।
क्षत्ता सौवीरराजस्य विष्टियोग्यमन्यत ॥
स राजा शिविकारूढो गन्तुं कृतमतिर्द्विज ।
बभूवेक्षुमतीतीरे कपिलर्षेर्वराश्रमम् ॥
श्रेयः किमत्र संसारे दुःखप्राये नृणामिति ।
प्रष्टुं तं मोक्षधर्मज्ञं कपिलाख्यं महामुनिम् ॥
उवाह शिविकां तस्य मुहुर्वचनचोदितः ।
नृणां विष्टिगृहीतानामन्येषां सोऽपि मध्यगः ॥
गृहीतो विष्टिना विप्रः सर्वज्ञानैकभाजनः ।
जातिस्मरोऽसौ पापक्षयकाम उवाह तम् ॥
ययौ जडगतिः सोऽथ युगमात्रावलोकनम् ।
कुर्वन्मतिमतां श्रेष्ठस्तदन्ये त्वरितं ययुः ॥
विलोक्य नृपतिः सोऽथ विषमं शिविकागतिम् ।
किमेतदित्याह समं गम्यतां शिविकावहाः ॥.....

शिविकोद्वाहकाः प्रोचुरयं यातीत्यसत्त्वरम् ।
किं श्रान्तः स्वल्पमध्वानं त्वयोढा शिविका मम ॥
किमायासासहो नित्यं पीवानसि निरीक्ष्यसे ।
नाहं पीवान्न चैवोढा शिविका भवतो मया ॥
न श्रान्तोऽस्मि न चायासो वोढव्योऽसि महीपते ।
प्रत्यक्षं भवता भूप यद्दृष्टं मम तद्वद ॥
बलवानबलश्चेति वाच्यं पश्चाद्विशेषणम् ।
त्वयोढा शिविका चेति त्वय्यद्यापि च संस्थिता ॥
मिथ्यैतदप्यत्रभवाञ्छृणोतु वचनं मम ।.....
अहं त्वं च तथान्ये च भूतैरुह्याम पार्थिव ।
गुणप्रवाहपतितो भूतवर्गोऽपि यात्ययम् ॥
आत्मा शुद्धोऽक्षरः शान्तो निर्गुणः प्रकृतेः परः ।
प्रवृद्धापचयौ नास्य एकस्याखिलजन्तुषु ॥.....
तथान्यजन्तुभिस्तुल्यः शिविकोत्थो न केवलम् ।
शैलद्रुमगृहोत्थोऽपि पृथिवीसंभवोऽपि वा ॥.....
भवतो मेऽखिलस्यास्य ममत्वेनोपबृंहितः ।
एवमुक्त्वाभवन्मौनी स वहञ्शिविकां द्विजः ।
सोऽपि राजाऽवतीर्योर्व्यां तत्पादौ जगृहे त्वरम् ॥
भो भो विसृज्य शिविकां प्रसादं कुरु मे द्विज ।
कथ्यतां को भवानत्र जाल्मरूपधरः स्थितः ॥
श्रूयतां कोऽहमित्येवं वक्तुं भूप न शक्यते ।
उपभोगनिमित्तं च सर्वत्रागमनक्रिया ॥
सुखदुःखोपभोगौ तु तौ देशाद्युपपादकौ ।
धर्माधर्मोद्भवौ भोक्तुं जन्तुर्देशादिमृच्छति ॥.....
शब्दोऽहमिति दोषाय नात्मन्येष तथैव च ।
अनात्मन्यात्मविज्ञानं शब्दो वा भ्रान्तिलक्षणः ॥.....
त्वं राजा शिविका चेयं वयं वाहाःपुरःसराः ।
अयं च भवतो लोको न सदेतन्नृपोच्यते ॥
वृक्षाद्दारु ततश्चेयं शिविका त्वदधिष्ठिता ।
क्व वृक्षसंज्ञा जातास्य दारुसंज्ञाथवा नृप ॥
वृक्षारूढो महाराजो नायं वदति ते जनः ।
न च दारूणि सर्वस्त्वां ब्रवीति शिविकागतम् ॥
शिविका दारुसंघातो रचनास्थितिसश्रितः ।
अन्वीक्ष्यतां नृपश्रेष्ठ तद्भेदे शिविका त्वया ॥.....
एतद्विवेकविज्ञानं यदशेषेषु जंतुषु ।
भवता दर्शितं विप्र तत्परं प्रकृतेर्महत् ॥

नाहं वहामि शिविकां शिविका न मयि स्थिता ।
शरीरमन्यदस्मत्तो येनायं शिविका धृता ॥
पूर्वमेव महाभागं कपिलर्षिमहं द्विज ।
प्रष्टुमभ्युद्यतो गत्वा श्रेयः किं तत्र शंस मे ॥
तदन्तरे च भवता यदिदं वाक्यमीरितम् ।
तेनैव परमार्थार्थं त्वयि चेतः प्रधावति ॥
कपिलर्षिर्भगवतः सर्वभूतस्य वै द्विज ।
विष्णोरंशो जगन्मोहनाशायोर्वीमुपागतः ॥
स एव भगवान्नूनमस्माकं हितकाम्यया ।
प्रत्यक्षतामत्रगतो यथैतद्भवतो द्विज ॥.....
भूयः पृच्छसि किं श्रेयः परमार्थं न पृच्छसि ।
श्रेयांस्यपरमर्थार्थान्यशेषान्येव भूपते ॥
आत्मा ध्येयः सदा भूप योगयुक्तस्तथा परः ।
श्रेयस्तस्यैव संयोगः श्रेयो यो परमात्मना ॥.....
ध्यानं चैवात्मनो भूप परमार्थार्थशब्दितम् ।
भेदकारि परेभ्यस्तत्परमार्थो न भेदवान् ॥

Vishṇupurāṇa 2,13,4,9,11-15,17-21. 23,29,31,41,45-54,56,61,67,70,72-74,76,77,82,87-91 ; 2,14, 3-4,7-10, 12,15,26.

The *ṛishis* had each one his own pet preference and also worshipped that preference as if it were the summum bonum. In fact they thought of that as the Almighty itself. In the *Taittirīya Upanishad* it is clearly given that the great sage Satyavachas son of Rathītara felt that truth was God, worshipped truth and practised it all his life. No wonder that the *Yajus* hymn gives it

सत्यमिति सत्यवचा राथीत्यः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9,1.

Another sage, Taponitya, son of Pauruśishṭi, who was ever after the highest penance, considered penance to be the Almighty:

तप इति तपोनिष्ठः पौरुशिष्टिः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9,1

The sage Nāka, son of Mudgala, thought the highest was *svādhyāya* and *pravachana* or study and teaching of the *Vedas*:

स्वाध्यायप्रवचने एवेति नाको मौद्गल्यः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9,1.

In fact the opening verse of the *Bhāgavata* meditates on Paramātmā as *Satya.* We meditate on that Highest Truth, from which proceed birth, existence and decay of the universe, that closely moves in and around every object though yet apart, omniscient and omnipotent, that by baring its mind caused the first seer (Brahmā) to reveal the import of the *Veda* that baffles even the greatest sages, and in which the three *guṇas, satva, rajas* and *tamas* are as factual as the coordination between light, water and earth as in अग्नेरापः, अद्भ्यः पृथिवी and that by its glory always rejects all that is illusory:

जन्माद्यस्य ययोन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट्
तेने ब्रह्म हृदा य आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यत्सूरयः ।
तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा
धाम्ना स्वेन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ॥

Bhāgavata 1,1,1.

The same is given by Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭapāda only in another mode of expression when he says that fortunate devotees revel in that easily comprehended from of the Almighty that is Pure Existence, sweet in reflecting the tenor of the *Veda,* pure in its overlooking all differences as this and that, composed of a body of the major and subtle elements as known from Vyāsa's teachings, that is luminous enwombing as it does the highest bliss uncovered by its own immaculate quality:

सत्त्वं यत्तत्पराभ्यामपरिकलनतो निर्मलं तेन ताव-
द्भूतैर्भूतेन्द्रियैस्ते वपुरिति बहुशः श्रूयते व्यासवाक्यात् ।
तत्स्वच्छत्वाद्यदच्छादिति परसुखचिद्गर्भनिर्भासरूपं
तस्मिन्वन्या रमन्ते श्रुतिमतिमधुरे सुग्रहे विग्रहे ते ॥

Nārāyaṇīyam 1,1.

The special greatness of *satya* is almost read into the utterances of the *ṛishis* that could never go in vain. That is why in the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam,* it is stated that the utterance of the *ṛishi* is not a mere wishful hope for the best, but a sure thing to happen. Śakuntalā very innocently asks Kaṇva when she would come back again to this their beloved hermitage, the sage replies in a manner that it should be fulfilled in its entirety. He almost has before him a vision of all that is to happen. That is why when Śakuntalā is reunited with Dushyanta and Aditi requests Kaśyapa to send word to Kaṇva of this glad news,

he at once remarks that by his great penance everything is before his eyes very clearly seen:

तपःप्रभावात्प्रत्यक्षं सर्वमेव तत्रभवतः ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7

Kaṇva reassures Śakuntalā that she would again be back in this peaceful hermitage, after having for long been the cowife of the vast earth surrounded by the ocean on all sides, and after enthroning the unparalleled prince, her noble son born of Dushyanta, to support the burden of the household and the state, again back with her husband to enjoy the peace of a saintly life:

भूत्वा चिराय चतुरन्तमहीसपत्नी
दौष्यन्तिमप्रतिरथं तनयं निवेश्य ।
भर्त्रा तदर्पितकुटम्बभरेण सार्धं
शान्ते करिष्यसि पदं पुनराश्रमेऽस्मिन् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,20.

When Śakuntalā bows to Kaṇva, he blesses her that she should be ever the most beloved to her husband as Śarmishṭhā was to Yayāti: and similarly should have her son an emperor like Śarmishṭhā who bore Puru of Yayāti:

ययातेरिव शर्मिष्ठा भुर्तर्बहुमता भव ।
सुतं त्वमपि संराजं सेव पूरुमवाप्नुहि ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,7.

Immediately the aged female ascetic Gautamī remarks, Oh! reverend Sir, this is your boon which would never fail. It is not a mere blessing which is a wish: भगवन् । वरः खल्येष नाशीः । When Māricha (i.e. Kaśyapa, exclaims that by the greatest good fortune Śakuntalā was a paragon of virtue, here was the perfection of desired offspring in this little boy, here was Dushyanta himself so great; and indeed it appeared a coming together of the coveted triad, faith, righteous wealth and ethical action:

दिष्ट्या शकुन्तला साध्वी सदपत्यमिदं भवान् ।
श्रद्धा वित्तं विधिश्चेति त्रितयं वः समागतम् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7,29

Dushyanta promptly responds, Oh reverend Sir! the fruition of desires here really precedes, and sighting you, the cause of it, is later. How unique indeed is your favour. The flower appears first and then comes the fruit. The clouds come first and then the rain. The sequence of cause and effect is normally this. But in the case of your favour, prosperity precedes even your utterance of favour:

भगवन् ! प्रागभिप्रेतसिद्धिः पश्चाद्दर्शनम् । अपूर्वः खलु वोऽनुग्रहः । कुतः ।
उदेति पूर्वं कुसुमं ततः फलं घनोदयः प्राक्तदनन्तरं पयः ।
निमित्तनैमित्तिकयोरयं क्रमस्तव प्रसादस्य पुरस्तु संपदः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntlam 1.

No wonder Mātali, the charioteer of Indra, explains how the *ṛishis* that are great creators (*prajāpatis*) thus show their favour:

एवं विधातारः प्रसीदन्ति

Abhijñānaśākuntlam 7.

It is again remarkably well put by Bhavabhūti that to the words of the great *ṛishis* of yore, the meaning of an utterance races to go and attach itself to the words composing it:

ऋषीणा पुनराद्यानां वाचमथोऽनु धावति ।

Mahāviracharita

He repeats this idea through the mouth of Arundhatī who declares that there should be no doubt about the positive truth in the occurrence of whatever is uttered by the sages that have realised the Brahman and shine in their glorious lustre, as in their speech is present auspicious Śrī herself, and never can they utter anything that can fail:

अविर्भूतज्योतिषां ब्राह्मणाना ये व्याहारास्तेषु मा संशयो भूत् ।
भद्रा ह्येषा वाचि लक्ष्मीर्निषक्ता नैते वाच विप्लुतार्था वदन्ति ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,18.

There are several stories to show how when a great *ṛishi* makes an utterance it has to come true. It cannot fail or be withdrawn. In other words it can never go in vain. In the *Kaṭhopanishad*, it is because even though it was in anger, the sage had said, 'I give you to Death',

and the sage having said that under extreme provocation, almo as 'go to hell', Nachiketas had immediately to go to the home of Yama. The story is even more elaborate in the *Mahābhārata*, where the truth of the utterance of the sage having to be protected had immediately to find himself in the residence of Yama. In the *Anuśāsanaparva*, the story is graphic about the feelings of Uddālaki the poor father of Nachiketas. The *rishi* was very old and feeble, and being engaged in sacrifice had his son to attend on him. Having bathed in the river, collected and placed Kuśa grass, sacrificial twigs, flowers and others like water vessel, roots and fruits for food, he forgot to bring them along and sent his son who was studying with him the *Veda* to bring them from the river bank where they were lying. But the current of the river had already carried them away and the boy returned and explained. The feeble *ṛishi*, exhausted, hungry and thirsty, easily angered, cursed his son to see Yama. Hit by this utterance of his that was almost a thunderbolt, the boy brought both his hands in reverence and, even as he was requesting him to be gracious, fell down dead. The father looking at the son fallen senseless and dead, immediately cursed and blamed himself and himself fell on the ground, lamenting for the boy. So passed the night, the father shedding tears for his son, with other *ṛishis* come to console him. Towards dawn, the boy slowly moved on his Kuśa bed like the crop in the field brightening up by fresh showers of rain. Eagerly the father asked his son who arose like one from a dream and wafted divine perfume. Oh my son! have you won celestial worlds by your merit? It is my good fortune you have returned to mortal life The boy replied as his father and all the sages listened. According to your command I had immediately gone to the kingdom of Yama and saw him seated in state in his royal hall, lustrous like gold, Yama the son of Surya offered me due worship with *arghya*, all for your sake and addressed me. My dear! you are not really dead; but you are here since your father, a great sage of immense penance and lustrous like fire had asked you to go and see me. His word could never go in vain. That is why I have received and seen you. You may now go back. Your father is sorrowing for you. What can I do for you as my dear guest. Please ask any boons and I shall grant you:

ऋषिरुद्दालकिर्दीक्षामुपगम्य ततः सुतम् ।
त्वं मामुपचरस्वेति नचिकेतमभाषत ॥
समाप्ते नियमे तस्मिन्महर्षिः पुत्रमब्रवीत् ।
उपस्पर्शनसक्तस्य स्वाध्यायाभिरतस्य च ॥
इध्म दर्भाः सुमनसः कलशश्चातिभोजनम् ।
विस्मृतं मे तदादाय नदीतीरादिहाव्रज ॥
गत्वानवाप्य तत्सर्वं नदीवेगसमाप्लुतम् ।
न पश्यामि तदित्येवं पितरं सोऽब्रवीन्मुनिः ॥
क्षुत्पिपासाश्रमाविष्टो मुनिरुद्दालकिस्तदा ।
यमं पश्येति तं पुत्रमशपत्स् महातपाः ॥
तथा स पित्राभिहितो वाग्वज्रेण कृताञ्जलिः ।
प्रसीदेति ब्रुवन्नेव गतसत्वोऽपतद्भुवि ॥
नचिकेतं पिता दृष्ट्वा पतितं दुःखमूर्च्छितः ।
किं मया कृतमित्युक्त्वा निपपात महीतले ॥
तस्य दुःखपरीतस्य स्वं पुत्रमनुशोचतः ।
व्यतीतं तदहःशेषं सा चोग्रा तत्र शर्वरी ॥
पित्र्येणाश्रुप्रपातेन नचिकेतः कुरूद्वह ।
प्रास्पन्दच्छयने कौश्ये वृष्टया सस्यमिवाप्लुतम् ॥
स पर्यपृच्छत्तं पुत्रं क्षीणं पर्यागतं पुनः ।
दिव्यैर्गन्धैः समादिग्धं क्षीणस्वप्नमिवोत्थितम् ॥
अपि पुत्र जिता लोकाः शुभास्ते स्वेन कर्मणा ।
दिष्ट्या चासि पुनः प्राप्तो न हि ते मानुषं वपुः ॥
प्रत्यक्षदर्शी सर्वस्य पुत्र पृष्टो महात्मना ।
स तां वार्तां पितुर्मध्ये महर्षीणां न्यवेदयत् ॥
कुर्वन्भवच्छासनमाशु यातो ह्यहं विशालां रुचिरप्रभावाम् ।
वैवस्वती प्राप्य सभामपश्यं सहस्रशो योजनहेमभाजाम् ॥.....
वैवस्वतोऽर्घ्यादिभिरर्हणैश्च भवत्कृते पूजयामास मां सः ।.....
यमोऽब्रवीन्मां न मृतोऽसि सौम्य यमं पश्येत्याह स त्वां तपस्वी ॥
पिता प्रदीप्ताग्निसमानतेजा न तच्छक्यमनृतं विप्र कर्तुम् ।
दृष्टस्तेऽहं प्रतिगच्छस्व तात शोचत्यसौ तव देहस्य कर्ता ॥
ददामि किंचापि मनः प्रणीतं प्रियातिथेस्तव कामान्वृणीष्व ।

Mahābhārata 13,71,2-19.

Vītahavya a Haihaya king aided by his sons of great valour overcame Haryaśva, the ruler of Kāśī, and in turn his son and grandson Divodāsa, who however, by the grace of Bharadvāja bore a son Pratardana who proved invincible in battle, extirpated the army and the sons of Vītahavya, who hotly pursued by Pratardana, in

despair repaired to the hermitage of sage Bhṛigu and sought refuge there. Pratardana followed and demanded Vītahavya to be handed over to him. Bhṛigu, true to his word of protection to the king, and aware of the might of his penance, though with trepidation as he so uttered, denied the presence of any except Brāhmaṇas in his hermitage, when Pratardana, unable to refute the utterance of a sage which was always the truth, turned back and left. And now Bhṛigu who, even as he spoke to Pratardana had accomplished his task of making Vītahavya a Brāhmaṇa by his *saṅkalpa* or wish to do संकल्पः कर्म मानसन् had now only to pronouce him a Brāhmaṇa, and lo! he became forthwith a Brāhmaṇa, his line of progeny thereafter claiming Bhṛigu the foster father and Vītahavya as a *ṛishi* of the Vādhūla family:

भृगोराश्रममासाद्य वीतहव्यवधोद्यतः ।
प्रतर्दनो मुनिं प्राह मुञ्चैनमिति दुर्मदः ॥
तच्छ्रुत्वा क्षत्रियो नेह कश्चित्सर्वे द्विजा वयम् ।
इत्युवाच भृगुर्भीतोऽसत्यादकम्पत ॥
क्षत्रामिधानात्प्रभ्रष्टं शत्रुं ज्ञात्वा प्रतर्दने ।
याते भृगुर्वीतहव्यं सत्यवाग्ब्राह्मणं व्यधात् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13, 1444-1446.

That is the greatness of a *ṛishi* whose words can never be anything except *satya*, The power of penance in Bhṛigu accomplished in a trice what Viśvāmitra attained after severe penance for thousands of years, and which sage Mataṅga could not attain even though he could become a celestial by severe asceticism:

पुनः पुनः स तपसा धूमायितजगत्त्रयः ।
इन्द्रादवाप देवत्वं न तु ब्रह्मण्यमुत्तमम् ॥
छन्दोदेव इति ख्यातः स मातङ्गाभिधः पुरा ।
खेचरोऽभून्मृगाक्षीणां पूज्यः परमवल्लभः ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1436-1437.

Even when Brahmā pronounced Viśvamitra a *Brahmaṛishi*, he was not content or so convinced as when Vaśishṭha described him so at the request of Brahmā and the celestials themselves:

पितामहवचः श्रुत्वा सर्वेषां च दिवौकसाम् ।
कृत्वा प्रणामं मुदितः व्याजहार महामुनिः ॥

ब्रह्मण्यं यदि मे प्राप्तं दीर्घमायुस्तथैव च ।
ओंकारश्य वषटाकारो वेदाश्च वरयन्तु माम् ॥
क्षत्रवेदविदां श्रेष्ठो ब्रह्मवेदविदामपि ।
ब्रह्मपुत्रो वशिष्ठो मामेवं वदतु देवता: ॥.....
तत: प्रसादितो देवैर्वशिष्ठो जपतां वर: ।
सख्यं चकार ब्रह्मर्षिरेवमस्त्विति चाब्रवीत् ॥
ब्रह्मर्षित्वं न सन्देह: सर्वं संपद्यते तव ।

Rāmāyaṇa 1,65,22-25

It is this that Bhavabhūti reiterates in another context where Vaśishṭha extols Viśvāmitra as a *Brahmaṛishi*, unasailable, in whom immeasurable penance is aflame with lustre, far exceeding the power of description in words or understanding through the mind, in short overwhelming:

सत्यमीदृशो विश्वामित्र: ।
यद्वाचां विषयमतीत्य चेतसां वा पर्यायात्परमतिशायनस्य वा यत् ।
ब्रह्मर्षौ तदिह दुरासदे समिद्धं तेजोभिर्ज्वलति महत्तपोऽप्रमेयम् ॥

and Viśvāmitra with reverence to Vāśishṭha accepts his complement not in vanity but as truth which alone can emanate from him:

स्तौपि चेत्सत्य एवास्मि सत्यसन्धा हि ते गिर: ।

Mahavīracharita 4,15,16.

There is such firm faith in the truth of a sage's word particularly of one like Jaratkāru, that when Vāsuki is alarmed to learn from his sister that the sage had left her, offended at what he considered an insult in waking him up to perform twilight worship for the setting sun, and grieves that his effort to have a nephew who could save the world of snakes from annihilation has failed, is reassured by her that before leaving he had assured her with the word '*asti*' 'there is' meaning that in her womb was a great sage in the making. Her confidence in the veracity of his statement was such that Vāsuki feels assured that the saviour of the reptile race was sure to be born and the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya when it would be performed as predicted could be stopped by him. Asked by me on the question of progeny he said 'it is there' and left. Even as a joke he had never uttered an untruth. Why should he be dubious regarding our important future? Oh nāga princess! grieve not. A son will be

born to you like the flaming fire, a righteous *ṛishi* learned in the *Vedas*. Oh brother! So said my husband whose only wealth is penance and then left.

पृष्टो मयाऽपत्यहेतोः स महात्मा महातपाः ।
अस्तीत्युत्तरमुद्दिश्य ममेदं गतवाँश्च सः ॥
स्वैरेष्वपि न तेनाहं स्मरामि वितथं वचः ।
उक्तपूर्वं कुतो राजन् सांपराये स वक्ष्यति ॥
न संतापस्त्वया कार्यः कार्यः प्रति भुजङ्गमे ।
उत्पत्स्यति स ते पुत्रो ज्वलनार्कसमप्रभः ॥
इत्युक्त्वा स हि मां भ्रातर्गतो भर्ता तपोधनः ।

Mahābhārata 1,48,10-13.

Satya has been worshipped tremendously and it has been the belief that the highest in character has the highest place in life and society. Even when endowed with all the qualities of his *tapasyā* and *vidyā* or supreme knowledge, the Brāhmaṇa is considered great mainly for his *satyavāk*. It is only *satya* that really makes him a Brāhmaṇa. Otherwise he should be considered a *brahmabandhu* one distantly connected with a real potential Brāhmaṇa, *satyavādī*. Asks, and rightly, Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita how among us there could be such colossal ignoramuses as could put such questions that would make one shudder: Who is that Vyāsa, who really is Manu and who indeed is Yājñavalkya, who have preached from housetops good counsel for us like fathers to their children. We see that they are the kith of the entire world, peerless oceans of compassion, and we see ourselves also as huge endless mountains of dark ignorance and untruth, in short *brahmabandhus*, shameless blot in Brāhmaṇa birth:

कोनु व्यासः क इह स मनुः कोन्वसौ याज्ञवल्क्यो ।
यैरुद्घुष्टं हितमसकृदस्मासु पित्रेव पुत्रे ।
पश्यामस्तां निरुपधिकृपासागरान् लोकबन्धून्
पश्यामोऽस्मान्निरवधितमःक्षमाधरान् ब्रह्मबन्धून् ॥

Śāntivilāsa 24.

Rāma is considered Brahmaṇya because he is *satyavādī*. Kṛishṇa is Brahmaṇya according to the *Vishṇusahasranāma* because he is a *satyavādī*. The story of Satyakāma in the *Chhāndogya* is an excellent example of this principle. He went to Gautama, the son of Haridru-

mat, desiring to become a pupil of his, to learn the highest supreme knowledge, and begged of him to take him as such:

सत्यकामो ह जावालो.....हरिद्रुमतं गौतममेत्योवच ।
ब्रह्मचर्यं भगवति वत्स्यामि । उपेया भगवन्तमिति ।

The teacher asked him affectionately from what family he came. The poor boy replied that he did not know it. When he had just asked his mother she had said that when she was young and he was born, she was engaged all the time in household duties, attending on guests, and so could not know to what family she belonged. My name is Jabālā, and you are named Satyakāma. So you are Satyakāma Jābāla. And so he describes himself as Satyakāma Jābāla:

तं होवाच, किंगोत्रोनु, सौम्य असीति । स होवाच नाहमेतद्वेद,
भोः, यद्गोत्रोऽहमस्मि । अपृच्छं मातरं, सा मा प्रत्यब्रवीत्, बह्वहं
चरन्ती परिचारिणी यौवने त्वां अलभे, साहं एतन्न वेद यद्गोत्रस्त्व-
मसि, जवाला तु नामाहमस्मि, सत्यकामो नाम त्वमसीति,
सोऽहं सत्यकामो जाबालोऽस्मि, भोः, इति ।

The teacher immediately responded and said emphatically that none except a Brāhmaṇa could thus describe a fact, and directing him to bring the sacred twigs as symbol of fire worship and *brahmacharya*, affectionately addressed him 'my dear' receiving him as his pupil, as he had not departed from the truth. He then initiated him and set duties on him as usual on other disciples:

तं होवाच । नैतदब्राह्मणो विवक्तुमर्हति । समिधं, सौम्य, आहर,
उप त्वा नेष्ये न सत्यादगा इति । तमुपनीय कृशानामवलानां चतुः
शता गा निराकृत्योवाच, इमाः, सौम्य, अनुसंव्रजेति ।

Chhāndogya Upanishad 4,4,3-5.

In the *Mahānārayaṇopanishad* rightly has it been said that the fruit of *satya* is that truth is the ultimate of the highest and those that attain the highest heaven, the highest worlds of bliss, would never fall thence. Truth is the characteristic of the good ones on earth and that is why every one delights in truth:

सत्य परं । परं सत्यं । सत्येन न सुवर्गाल्लोकाच्च्यवन्ते
कदाचन, सत्यं हि सत्यं । तस्मात् सत्ये रमन्ते ।

Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad 78,1.

By truth the wind blows, the sun shines in the heavens because of truth, truth is the mainstay of speech itself. In short everything is established in truth. Hence, it is said and rightly that truth is the supreme means of bliss:

सत्तेन वायुरावाति । सत्येनादित्यो रोचते दिवि । सत्यं वाच:
प्रतिष्ठा । सत्ये सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् । तस्मात्सत्यं परमं वदन्ति ।

Mahānarāyaṇa Upaṇishad 79,2.

Bhīshma is the greatest example of vindication of *satya*. He had made a vow and he kept it. That vow was such a terrible one that the prince, son of Śantanu and Gaṅgā, originally named Devavrata, was renamed Bhīshma because of his terrific vow impossible of others. When Gaṅgā handed over this noble young prince to Śantanu, she informed him how he was the last of all her children saved by the king, who had learnt the *Vedas* from Vaśishṭha himself, all the *astras* and *śastras* both from Śukra and Bṛihaspati and equalled Paraśurāma himself in *Dhanurveda*, and withal was most proficient in statecraft (*rājadharma*), charming, devoted, full of humility, an ideal prince indeed. The king joyously rceived him and made him the crown prince. The great feature about Bhīshma here is this, that as the crown prince, he won the heart of the entire kingdom:

राष्ट्रं च रञ्जयामास वृत्तेन भरतर्षभ ।

Mahābhārata 1,100,44,

Coming to know that his father had fallen in love with the charming and fragrant-smelling damsel Satyavatī, who was by destiny brought up in the home of a fisherman, but could not obtain her without a promise that the son born of her would succeed him as king, Bhīshma, unable to know the truth of the affair from his own father who would not reveal it, but somehow getting acquainted with it from an old minister, himself went to the chief of the fishermen to request his daughter to be given in wedlock to his father. Learning the condition laid down from his own mouth, he swore on the spot that the son born of her to his father would be the king and no one else. Take this as my vow in truth: none born or yet unborn could state as I have done. I shall act in consonance with your wish that the one who is born of her shall be our king:

इदं मे व्रतमादत्स्व सत्यं सत्यवतां वर ।
नैव जातो न वाजात ईदृशं वक्तुमुत्सहेत् ॥
एवमेतत्करिष्यामि यथा त्वमनुभाषसे ।
योऽस्यां जनिष्यते पुत्रः स नो राजा भविष्यति ॥

But still the fisherman objected. He had his own doubt that even if Bhīshma renounced the kingdom he was entitled to in favour of his step-brother when born, it may not be that Bhīshma's progeny would give up their claim to the throne. This was what still troubled him in deciding the factor:

राजमध्ये प्रतिज्ञातमनुरूपं तवैव तत् ।
नान्यथा तन्महाबाहो संशयोऽत्र न कश्चन ।
तवापत्यं भवेद्यत्तु तत्र नः संशायो महान् ॥

Here comes the greatness and glory of Bhīshma that he made a proclamation impossible from any other. Oh chief of fishermen! note this word of mine which I utter with immaculate truth as all these princes assembled listen. I repeat this that for my father, Oh kings and princes! I have already renounced the kingdom. I now make a determination even regarding my own progeny. From today I shall observe complete continence. Even childless I shall have in heaven the highest celestial abodes. I have never from my birth uttered a falsehood and as long as there is breath in my body I shall never produce progeny. Give your daughter to my father. I give up completely both the kingdom and conjugal happiness and I tell you in truth that I shall practice the highest asceticism:

दाशराज निबोधेदं वचनं मे नरोत्तम ।
ऋषयो वाथवा देवा भूतान्यन्तर्हितानि च ॥.....
इदं वचनमादत्स्व सत्येन मम जल्पतः ।
श्रृण्वतां भूमिपालानां यद्ब्रवीमि पितुः कृते ॥
राज्यं तावत्पूर्वमेव मया त्यक्तं नराधिपाः ।
अपत्यहेतोरपि च करिष्येऽद्य विनिश्चयम् ॥
अद्यप्रभृति मे दाश ब्रह्मचर्यं भविष्यति ।
अपुत्रस्यापि मे लोका भविष्यन्त्यक्षया दिवि ॥
नहि जन्मप्रभृत्युक्तं मम किंचिदिहानृतम् ।
यावत्प्राणा ध्रियन्ते वै मम देहं समाश्रिताः ॥
तावन्न जनयिष्यामि पित्रे कन्यां प्रयच्छ मे ।
परित्यजाम्यहं राज्यं मैथुनं चपि सर्वशः ॥
ऊर्ध्वरेता भविष्यामि दाश सत्यं ब्रवीमि ते ।.....

and here is the wonderful episode of the change of the name Devavrata by the celestials and the sages from heaven, amazed and delighted to see a *mahāpurusha* like this who could make such a truthful statement to maintain which in life was the most arduous task. Here is the word uttered by the celestials, nymphs, sages and all those assembled in the firmament, overjoyed and thrilled as they showered sweet-smelling flowers on him as with one accord was heard the sound, 'This is Bhīshma' as a commentary on the terrible truth spoken:

ततोऽन्तरिक्षेऽप्सरसो देवाः सर्षिगणास्तदा ।
अभ्यवर्षन्त कुसुमैर्भीष्मोऽयमिति चाब्रुवन् ॥

Mahābhārata 1,100,85-87,91,92,94-98

When however the family of the Kurus was threatened with annihilation when Vichitravīrya, son of Satyavatī by Śantanu, died young without a son to succeed him, and Satyavatī requested Bhīshma to get crowned as king and continue the line through his progeny, with due respect to his step-mother he firmly reiterated his vow made long ago regarding both kingdom and progeny:

मम पुत्रस्तव भ्राता वीर्यवान् सुप्रियश्च ते ।
बाल एव गतः स्वर्गमपुत्रः पुरुषर्षभ ॥.....
मन्नियोगान्महाबाहो धर्मं कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥
राज्ये चैवाभिषिच्यस्व भारताननुशाधि च ।
दारांश्च कुरु धर्मेण मा निमज्जीः पितामहान् ॥

Mahābhārata 1,103,8,10-11

Bhīshma's remarkable peroration to explain his verdict on his vow rejecting regal state and matrimony is one of the most thrilling in literature pronounced by the greatest *rājarishi* of his age. I would gladly give up sovereignty over the three worlds, the kingdom of heaven itself or even any higher even than both these, but would never give up truth. Earth may abandon smell, water its taste, light may give up its form, wind its quality of touch, the sun may lose lustre, fire may shed its heat, the sky may be void of its essential quality of sound, the moon may shed the cool nature of its rays, the mighty Indra that killed Vṛitra may cast aside his valour and even Yama the just may throw over justice, but I shall, however, never decide to abandon truth. And the wondering Satyavatī has to confess

that she was fully conscious of his superdevotion to truth and his great power to create at will heavenly spheres by his lustre:

परित्यजेयं त्रैलोक्यं राज्यं देवेषु वा पुनः ।
यद्वाप्यधिकमेताभ्यां न तु सत्यं कथंचन ।।
त्यजेच्च पृथिवी गन्धमापश्च रसमात्मनः ।
ज्योतिस्तथा त्यजेद्रूपं वायुः स्पर्शगुणं त्यजेत् ।।
प्रभां समुत्सृजेदर्को धूमकेतुस्तथोष्मताम् ।
त्यजेच्छब्दं तथाकाशं सोमः शीतांशुतां त्यजेत् ।।
विक्रमं वृत्रहा जह्याद्धर्मं जह्याच्च धर्मराट् ।
न त्वहं सत्यमुत्सृष्टुं व्यवसेयं कथंचन ।।.....
माता सत्यवती भीष्ममुवाच तदनन्तरम ।
जानामि ते स्थितिं सत्ये परां सत्यपराक्रम ।।
इच्छन् सृजेथास्त्रीन् लोकानन्यांस्त्वं स्वेन तेजसा ।

Mahābhārata 1,103,15-21.

Bhīshma's discourses from his *śaratalpa* (Fig. 48) are the most exhilarating ethical code of conduct in life with *satya* as the root of all.

The legend at the beginning of the *Harshacharita* itself which gives the descent of Sarasvatī from heaven to be born as a mortal on earth is because the ire of Durvāsā was roused and yet he had pronounced that she should go to the earth and be born a mortal. Once uttered that was a truth which could never be erased, which even he himself could not withdraw in spite of the entreaties of the several *ṛishis* including his own father Atri. Not only the *ṛishis* but even Brahmā himself pacified Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī and though he admonished Durvāsā for his undue anger which as a sage he should have controlled, he felt he himself could not interfere in this natural law of truth triumphing, and this Bāṇa puts dramatically. So entreated by the *ṛishis* with the words Oh reverend Sir! this is not a case for a curse, and coaxingly beseeched by his disciples with hands brought together in reverence exclaiming Oh master! please forgive this one transgression, and being obstructed by the age Atri himself Oh my son! do not ruin your penance, Durvāsā, beyond himself with rage, exclaimed Oh shameless one! I shall bring down your stature born of pride in possessing an atom of knowledge. Go down below to the world of the mortals! So saying he poured water to the accompaniment of the curse. Sarasvatī herself stopped Sāvitrī preparing herself

for a counter curse with these words of entreaty Oh my companion! control your anger! even with mind clouded and unpolished, Brāhmaṇas by their own birth have to be honoured:

ततो मर्षय भगवन् ! अभूमिरेष शापस्येत्यनुनाथ्यमानोऽपि तापसैः, उपाध्याय ! स्खलितमेकं क्षमस्वेति बद्धाञ्जलिपुटैः प्रसाद्यमनोऽपि स्वशिष्यैः, पुत्रक ! मा कृथास्तपसः प्रत्यूहमिति निवार्यमणोऽप्यत्रिणा, रोषावेशविवशो दुर्वासा 'दुर्विनीते ! व्यपनयामि ते विद्यालवावलेपजनितमुन्नतिम् । अधस्ताद्गच्छ मर्त्यलोकमित्युक्त्वा तच्छापोदकं विससर्ज । ततः प्रतिशापदानोद्यतां च सावित्री 'सखि ! संहर रुषम् । असंस्कृतमतयोऽपि जात्यैव द्विजन्मानो माननीयाः' इत्यभिदधाना सरस्वत्यैवेनां न्यवारयत् ।

Harshacharīta 1,p.18

Even Brahmā in his exhortation against his anger addresses Durvāsā without the least trace of anger, only pointing out that his course of action was not right. O reverend Brāhmaṇa: The path you have trod is not the one followed by the meritorious. It only destroys:

ब्रह्मन् ! न खलु साधुसेवितोऽयं पन्थाः येनासि प्रवृत्तः विहन्त्येषः ।

Harshacharīta 1, p. 19.

The fruit of this and the truth of the statement of the sage is clearly seen in the song of dawn by the goose-herd of the warbing swans of Brahmā's chariot, Oh noblest sweet swan! ever fondled in your dwelling of immaculate Mānasa lake (immaculate mind) longingly twinkling your eyes, descend for a while into yonder tank below, soon again you would be back in the abode of lotuses. As she listened to this Sarasvatī felt that it seemed to be a reminder to her. Well, I should respect the sage's utterance. So she got up, deciding on descending to the earth, abandoning her sorrowing companions around her, thrice ambulated clockwise four-faced Brahmā and somehow coaxingly prevailing on the assemblage of holy ones determined to follow her to return, she proceeded in the company of Sāvitrī from the world of Brahmā:

अपरेद्युरुदिते भगवति त्रिभुवनशेखरे.....विरोचने विरोचमाने
नातिदूरवर्ती पितामहविमानहंसकुलपालकः पर्यटन्नपरवक्त्रमुच्चैरगायत्

तरलयसि दृशं किमुत्सुकामकलुषमानसवासलालिते ।
अवतर कलहंसि वापिकां पुनरपि यास्यसि पङ्कजालयम् ॥

तच्छ्रुत्वा सरस्वत्यप्यचिन्तयत् । अहमिवानेन पर्यनुयुक्ता । भवतु मानयामि मुनेर्वचनमित्युत्थाय कृतक्षितितलावतरणसङ्कल्पा परित्यज्य वियोगविक्लंव परिजन ज्ञातिवर्गमपगण्य त्रिः प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य चतुर्मुखं कथमप्यनुनयनिवर्तितानुयायिव्रतिव्राता ब्रह्मलोकत. सावित्रीद्वितीया निर्जगाम ।

Harshacharita 1, p. 28.

Even in the case of the highest celestials themselves, the words of *ṛishis* have to come true. It is no wonder that Rāma's departure from Ayodhyā renouncing an empire, in Kālidāsa's mode of description ever so poetic and thrilling, was to save his father from deviation from truth and consequent fall into abyssmal depths of hell. Rāma with Sītā and Lakshmaṇa as his companions entered the Daṇḍaka forest; at the same time he also entered individually the affectionate hearts of all the saintly sages in the forest:

स सीतालक्ष्मणसखः सत्याद्गुरुमलोपयन् ।
विवेश दण्कारण्य प्रत्येकं च सता मनः ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 12,9.

Even Daśaratha who knew he was dying by his separation from Rāma, would not stop him, as truth was higher than even his life. Daśaratha rated high the attainment of purity by sticking to truth even if it cost his life.

शरीरत्यागमात्रेण शुद्धिलाभममन्यत ।

Raghuvaṁśa 12,10.

In another context, Rāma tells Sītā that he would if necessary rather give up his own life, even Sītā herself, dearer to him than his life, and even Lakshmaṇa, but never fail to keep a word given by him:

अप्यहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते मलक्ष्मणाम् ।
न तु वाक्य प्रतिश्रुत्य ब्राह्मणानां विशेषतः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 3,10,19.

As already observed, if a *ṛishi* so chose to act, he could curse any. Even Sarasvatī, the consort of Brahmā himself, could not escape the curse of Durvāsā. Even the sweet and soft-spoken Priyamvada, the son of Priyadarśana, the Gandharva emperor, was born an elephant by the curse of the sage Matanga, as he could not suffer the pride and vanity of the youth:

मतङ्गशापादवलेपमूलादवाप्तवानस्मि मतङ्गजत्वम् ।
अवेहि गन्धर्वपतेस्तनूजं प्रियंवदं मां प्रियदर्शनस्य ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5,53.

The commentator Chāritravardha explains it further by saying how it was the almost insulting attitude towards the worship of Śiva that roused the anger of the normally patient sage Mataṅga:

पुरा किलेश्वरसेवागमनेऽस्तर्वगर्वसंतापितेन
जातमन्युना गजो भवेति शप्तः इति वार्ता ।

We have another classical instance of similar anger on the part of Durvāsā, even normally irascible and described as requiring no great provocation, being proverbially angry:

एष हि दुर्वासाः सुलभकोपो महर्षिः.....तया कोऽन्यो हुतवहादृग्धुं प्रभविष्यति ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4

Who else except the fire could so burn. This is the remark of Priyamvadā to Anusūyā when asked by her to fall at his feet and coax him to relax the curse somehow. The reply comes immediately Oh my friend! By nature so very crooked, how would he accept anybody's coaxing. However, I have succeeded in slightly pacifying him. It is this Durvāsā according to the episode in the *Vishṇupurāṇa* that brought down Indra from his great glory by a curse (Fig 49). Again because of the extreme pride of the lord of gods, who, without accepting with the highest devotion as *nirmālya* a garland of Santānaka flowers of rich perfume, presented to sage Durvāsā by a celestial nymph and worn on his locks, which he graciously in turn presented him, placed it on the temples of the elephant Airāvata, which pulled it down with its trunk and trampled under foot. This so roused the rage of Durvāsā that he cursed him to lose the glory of his position which made him so vain, proud and disrespectful towards the highest blessing of grace offered him by no other than the son of sage Atri himself. Durvāsā, a part as it were of Śiva's glory born on earth, was once moving about when he saw a lovely garland highly perfumed with the aroma of Santāna flowers in the hand of a nymph (Vidyādharī) which so pleased him that he asked for it, appearing mad as was always his wont. She bowed to him and gladly gave it. Again like one deranged, he wound it around his *jaṭās* and continued his tramp when

he sighted the lord of the celestials approaching him seated on his stately elephant Airāvata. Like one almost out of his mind, he took the garland swarmed by bees mad after its perfume out of his *jaṭās* and threw it at Indra. Indra received and placed it on the temples of Airāvata, and it looked beautiful like the stream of Gaṅgā on the peak of the Himālaya mountain. Attracted by the fragrance, the elephant pulled it with his trunk, smelt, threw it on the ground and trampled it. This roused the ire of the great sage Durvāsā. Oh Indra! wicked and vain in your prosperity, you have become indiscriminate. I had given you a celestial garland, the very abode of Lakshmī herself, as an act of grace and affection towards you. Instead of receiving it with reverence as an offering of grace, and without placing it on your crown with your eyes sparkling with joy, you have insulted this gift of mine. In consequence you will ere long lose your empire over the three worlds:

दुर्वासाः शङ्करस्यांशः चचार पृथिवीमिमाम् ।
स ददर्श स्रजं दिव्यां ऋषिविद्याधरीकरे ॥
सांतानिकानामखिलं यस्य गन्धेन वासितम् ।.....
तां यथाचे वरारोहां विद्याधरवधूं ततः ॥
यचिता तेन तन्वङ्गी मालां विद्याधराङ्गना ।
ददौ तस्मै विशालाक्षी सादरं प्रणिपत्य तम् ॥
तामादायात्मनो मूर्ध्नि स्रजमुन्मत्तरूपधृक् ।
कृत्वा स विप्रो मैत्रेय परिवभ्राम मेदिनीम् ॥
स ददर्श समायान्तमुन्मत्तैरावतस्थितम् ।
त्रैलोक्याधिपतिं देवं सह देवैः शचीपतिम् ॥
तामात्मनः स शिरसः स्रजमुन्मत्तषट्पदम् ।
आदायामरराजाय चिक्षेपोन्मत्तवन्मुनिः ॥
गृहीत्वामरराजेन स्रगैरावतमूर्धनि ।
न्यस्ता रराज कैलासशिखरे जाह्नवी यथा ॥
मदान्धकारिताक्षोऽसौ गन्धाकृष्टेन वारणः ।
करेणाघ्राय चिक्षेप तां स्रजं धरणीतले ॥
ततश्चुक्रोध भगवान् दुर्वासा मुनिसत्तमः ।
मैत्रेय देवराजं तु क्रुद्धश्चैतदुवाच ह ॥
ऐश्वर्यमददुष्टात्मन्नतिस्तब्धोऽसि वासव ।
श्रियो धाम स्रजं यस्त्वं महतां नाभिनन्दसि ॥
प्रसाद इति नोक्तं ते प्राणिपातपुरःसरम् ।
हर्षोत्फुल्लकपोलेन न चापि शिरसा धृता ॥

मया दत्तामिमां मालां यस्मान्न बहु मन्यसे ।
त्रैलोक्यश्रीरतो मूढ विनाशमुपयास्यति ॥

Vishṇupurāṇa 1,9,2-14.

It is not necessary to reiterate that the utterance of Durvāsā proved only too true.

It is again the word of the Vālakhilyas, a host of great *ṛishis*, no larger than the size of the thumb each, but endowed with the highest spiritual power by their penance, that again almost deprived Indra of his high state though fortunately saved by Kaśyapa. The Vālakhilyas were helping Kaśyapa with material for the performance of a sacrifice. While Indra was bringing material in large quantity, a huge load of Śamī and Audumbara twigs and Palāśa leaves in a bundle on his head and similarly other *ṛishis* whatever they could, the poor tiny sages only a thumb high, weak and emaciated because of austerities, could hardly carry by a supreme effort, one or two leaves of Palāśa. This so excited Indra's ego that he could scarcely control his laughter which roused the anger of the Vālakhilyas and invited their curse. Garuḍa, on the other hand, who was mighty beyond description, feeling hungry as he was proceeding in his quest for *amṛita* and instructed by his father Kaśyapa, satisfied his hunger by eating up a tortoise and an elephant from a huge lake, two wicked brothers Vibhāvasu and Supratīka so transformed and ever in fued undaunted by their dimensions, as he carried them lightly in his claws; but in the act when the branch of the huge tree on which he tried to rest broke, he would not rest before he safely deposited the tiny-sized Vālakhilyas performing penance hanging from the very branch of the large tree that broke as he settled on it. Noticing the sages, the very abode of lustre and penance, and out of deference for them, Garuḍa rushed to his father to request him to beg of them slowly to descend from the bough as he carefully held it in his beak, the tortoise and elephant still in his claws, exciting the wonder and admiration of the Vālakhilyas. Kaśyapa did this and they came down, admiring the bird and, along with Kaśyapa, blessed him in his errand to bring *amṛita*. The Vālakhilyas were so amazed at the immense strength of the bird that could carry the monstrous tortoise and elephant in his

claws and the huge bough in his beak that they appropriately named him the flyer with giant weight:

गुरुं भारं समासाद्योड्डीन एष विहङ्गमः ।
गरुडस्तु खगश्रेष्ठस्तस्मात्पन्नगभोजनः ॥

Mahābhārata 1,30,7.

The laughter of Indra in derison so enraged the Vālakhilyas that they decided to pronounce the birth of an Indra a hundredfold mightier to be born of Kaśyapa by that very sacrifice in which they participated. This made Indra get frightened as his position was in jeopardy. Once the Vālakhilyas had pronounced that a mighty Indra would be born he could do nothing to avert it. He sought refuge of Kaśyapa who had to come to his rescue by requesting the Vālakhilyas to save Indra by creating an Indra no doubt as they had said but pronouncing Garuḍa yet to be born by the efficacy of the sacrifice created Indra among birds, the lord of birds. That is how he is Patagendra or Khagendra, whom neither Indra or the other Dikpālas could withstand as he engaged them in fight on his mission to get *amṛita* (Fig. 50). Poor Indra was saved utter discomfiture by almost losing his lordship over the celestials. It would probably have been Garuḍa become Indra by the power of the truth in the utterance of the Vālakhilyas, the tiny great *ṛishis*. The supercilious laughter of Indra and the truth of the utterance of the Vālakhiliyas had such tremendous effect:

अथापश्यदृषीन् ह्रस्वानङ्गुष्ठोदरवर्ष्मणः ।
पलाशवर्तिकामेकां वहतः संहतान् पथि ॥
प्रलीनान्स्वेष्विवाङ्गेषु निराहारान्स्तपोधनान् ।
क्लिश्यमानान् मन्दबलान् गोष्पदे संप्लुतोदके ॥
तान् सर्वान्विस्मयाविष्टो वीर्योन्मत्तः पुरन्दरः ।
अवहस्याभ्यगाच्छीघ्रं लङ्घयित्वावमन्य च ॥
तेऽथ रोषसमाविष्टाः सुभृशं जातमन्यवः ।
इन्द्रोऽन्यः सर्वदेवानां भवेदिति यतव्रताः ।
तपसो नः फलेनाद्य दारुणः सम्भवत्विति ॥
तद्बुध्वा भृशसंतप्तो देवराजः शतक्रतुः ।
जगाम शरणं तत्र कश्यपं शंसितव्रतम् ॥.....
तान् कश्यप उवाचेदं सान्त्वपूर्वं प्रजापतिः ।
अयमिन्द्रस्त्रिभुवने नियोगाद्ब्रह्मणः कृतः ॥

इन्द्रार्थे च भवन्तोऽपि यत्नवन्तस्तपोधनाः ।
न मिथ्या ब्रह्मणो वाक्यं कर्तुमर्हथ सत्तमाः ॥.....
भवत्वेष पतत्रीणामिन्द्रोऽतिबलसत्त्ववान् ।
प्रसादः क्रियतामस्य देवराजस्य याचतः ॥.....
तथा चैवं विधत्स्वात्र यथा श्रेयोऽनुपश्यसि ॥

Mahābhārata 1,31,8-20,23.

Here again, it is the truth of the Vālakhilyas that triumphed, but to save Indra there was a slight modification suggested by Kaśyapa.

When Arjuna had gone to Dwārakā, after the great calamity that occurred there, and tried to bring back the Yādava women and the last progeny to represent the Yādava line safely over to Hastināpura, after the passing away of Kṛishṇa, Balarāma, Vasudeva and the rest of the Yādavas, he no doubt went with great sorrow but he never felt that he would be thwarted in his attempt; and when he had suffered tremendous defeat at the hands of the Ābhīras who carried away the entire harem of the Yādavas, including the women of Kṛishṇa himself, except the *ashṭapatnīs* or the eight wives that had ended themselves soon after Krishṇa, strangely enough he could not even lift the Gāṇḍīva bow and use it and had become so thoroughly demoralised, that it was only with great difficulty he could reach Mathurā and coronate Vajra, the only surviving heir of the Yādavas as king. Here he met Vyāsa again who, understanding his difficulty, comforted him giving him the reason for his defeat and advising him not to get disheartened, as fate determined everything, and advised him that as his life of utility on earth had ended along with that of his brothers, he was to go to the penance grove for performing penance and seeking final bliss. He hastened him to do it within the next few days.

The reason for the defeat given by Vyāsa is wonderful. Ashṭāvakra, the great sage who was brilliant even as a little boy, was immersed in water when he saw nymphs in the sky bowing to him, and pleased, he granted them boons. Some of them were satisfied with his very look of grace and told him so, while so many others begged of him that they should have Purushottama as their husband. At once Ashṭāvakra assured them that they would have their wish fulfilled. Because of the potency of his penance, his blessing was ful-

filled later. After granting them the boon, when Ashṭāvakra came out of the water, looking at his deformity — probably this was before he went to see Janaka and met his father, who made him whole again — they were so amazed at his ugly form that they giggled with laughter. Enraged, the young sage, cursed them that while they would become consorts of Purushottama, they would become captives of the lowest barbarous ones on earth. That is why the Ābhīras could triumph and carry away the entire female folk of the Yādavas, including so many of those who had become consorts of Kṛishṇa, who was no other than Purushottama himself, Arjuna rendered helpless, unable to lift even his Gāṇḍīva bow:

ततोर्जुनः प्रेतकार्यं कृत्वा तेषां यथाविधि ।
निश्चक्राम जनं सर्वं गृहीत्वा वज्रमेव च ॥
द्वारवत्या विनिष्क्रान्ताः कृष्णपत्न्यः सहस्रशः ।.....
यस्मिन्दिने हरिर्यातो दिवं संत्यज्य मेदिनीम् ।
तस्मिन्नेवावतीर्णोयं कालकायो बली कलिः ॥
प्लावयामास तां शून्यां द्वारकां च महोदधिः ।.....
दृष्टाः स्त्रियो नीयमाना दस्यूनां निहतेश्वराः ॥.....
आभीरा मन्त्रयामासुः समेत्यात्यन्तदुर्मदाः ॥
अयमेकोऽर्जुनो धन्वी स्त्रीजनं निहतेश्वरम् ।
नयत्यस्मानतिक्रम्य धिगेतद्ध्रुवतां बलम् ॥.....
ततोऽर्जुनो धनुर्दिव्यं गाण्डीवमजरं युधि ।
आरोपयितुमारेभे न शशाक च वीर्यवान् ॥.....
मिषतः पाण्डुपुत्रस्य ततस्ताः प्रमदोत्तमाः ।
आभीरैरपकृष्यन्त कामाच्चान्याः प्रवव्रजुः ॥. ....
ततः सुदुःखितो जिष्णुः कष्टं कष्टमिति ब्रुवन् ।
अहो भगवतानेन मुक्तोस्मीति रुरोद वै ॥.....
इत्थ वदन् ययौ जिष्णुर्मथुराख्यां पुरोत्तमाम् ।
चकार तत्र राजानं वज्रं यादवनन्दनम् ॥
स ददर्श ततो व्यासं फल्गुनः काननाश्रयम् ।
तमुपेत्य महाभागं विनयेनाभ्यवादयत् ॥.....
भीष्मद्रोणाङ्गराजाद्यास्तथा दुर्योधनादयः ।
यत्प्रभावेण निर्दग्धाः स कृष्णस्त्यक्तवान् भुवम् ॥
निर्यौवनहतश्रीका भ्रष्टच्छायेव मे मही ।
विभाति तात नैकोऽहं विरहे तस्य चक्रिणः ॥.....
आनीयमानमाभीरैः कृष्ण कृष्णावरोधनम् ।
हृतं यष्टिप्रहरणैः परिभूय बलं मम ॥.....

अलं ते व्रीडया पार्थ न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ।
अवेहि सर्वभूतेषु कालस्य गतिरीदृशी ॥
कालो भवाय भूतानामभवाय च पाण्डव ।
कालमूलमिदं ज्ञात्वा भव स्थैर्यधनोऽर्जुन ॥.....
गृहीता दस्युभिर्यच्च भवतः शोचिताः स्त्रियः ।
तदप्यहं यथावृत्तं कथयामि तवार्जुन ॥.....
अष्टावक्रः पुरा विप्र उदवासपरोऽभवत् ।
वहून वर्षगणान् पार्थ गृह्णन्ब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥
जितेष्वसुरसंघेषु मेरुपृष्ठे महोत्सवः ।
वभूव तत्र गच्छन्त्यो ददृशुस्तं सुरस्त्रियः ॥.....
तुष्टुवुस्तं महात्मानं प्रशशंसुश्च पाण्डव ।
आकण्ठमग्नं सलिले जटाभारधरं मुनिम् ॥
विनयावनताश्चैनं प्रणेमुः स्तोत्रतत्पराः ।.....
प्रसन्नोऽहं महाभागा भवतीनां यदिप्यते ।
मत्तस्तद्ध्रियतां सर्वं प्रदास्याम्यपि दुर्लभम् ॥
रम्भातिलोत्तमाद्या वै दिव्योप्सरसोऽब्रुवन् ।
प्रसन्ने त्वय्यसंप्राप्तं किमस्माकमिति द्विज ॥
इतरास्त्वब्रुवन विप्र प्रसन्नो भगवान् यदि ।
तदिच्छामः पतिं प्राप्तुं विप्रेन्द्र पुरुषोत्तमम् ॥
एवं भविष्यतीत्युक्त्वा उत्ततार जलान्मुनिः ।
तमुत्तीर्णं च ददृशुर्विरूपं वक्रमष्टधा ॥
तं दृष्ट्वा गूहमानानां यासां हासः स्फुटोऽभवत् ।
ताः शशप मुनिः कोपमवाप्य कुरुनन्दन ॥
यस्माद्विरूपरूपं मां मत्वा हासावमानना ।
भवतीभिः कृता तस्मादेष शापं ददाम्यहम् ॥
मत्प्रसादेन भर्तारं लब्ध्वा तु पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
मच्छापोपहताः सर्वा दस्युहस्तं गमिष्यथ ॥.....
एवं तस्य मुनेः शापादष्टावक्रस्य केशवम् ।
भर्तारं प्राप्य ता याता दस्युहस्तं सुराङ्गनाः ॥
तत्त्वया नात्र कर्तव्यः शोकोऽल्पोपि हि पाण्डव ।
तेनैवाखिलनाथेन सर्वं तदुपसंहृतम् ॥

Vishṇupurāṇa 5,38,5-85

The truth of the utterance is so great that if uttered by one dedicated to *satya* and *tapas* it has to happen whatever it is. Sage Maitreya, the pupil of Parāśara, whom even Vyāsa regarded with veneration, approached Dhṛitarāshṭra at Hastināpura, touched by the miserable condition in which he found the Pāṇḍavas, dressed in bark

garments in the forest Kāmyaka, and all by the wickedness of Duryodhana to which Dhritrāshṭra was also nearly agreeable, to counsel him in proper behaviour. Dhritarāshṭra and Duryodhana were together and received him with reverence. He reminded them of the most recent event of Kimmīra a formidable giant crushed by Bhīma and made to go to another world like Baka and Hidimba earlier. He advised them to be amiable and affectionate and not hazard total annihilation of their race on the battlefield. As he was so pronouncing only for their good, Duryodhana with over-weaning pride, with his ears and eyes turned away from his wise counsel, rubbed the floor with his foot and clapped his thigh in disdain. This so angered the saintly Maitreya, by nature so sweet, that he disgorged on him a great flame of fire of a formidable curse assuring him that the antidote to his wicked pride would be on the battlefield where the elephants with their temples shattered and warriors killed would have the finale in the fearful breaking of Duryodhana's thigh by Bhīma himself:

अथापश्यत मैत्रेयः कृशानुसदृशो मुनिः ।.....
सपुत्र कौरवपतिं सभासीन समभ्यधात् ॥
राजन्नविनयो घोरः किं त्वयायमुपेक्षितः ।
कुलाचारं समुत्सृज्य वर्तसे कैतवेन यत् ॥.....
हिडिम्बबककिम्मीरहन्ता भीमोऽपि दुसहः ।
दृष्टा मया वल्कलिनः पाण्डवाः काम्यके वने ॥.....
इति ब्रुवाण मैत्रेयं दर्पादनवलोकयन् ।
क्ष्मा पदेन लिखन्नूरु जघान कुरुनन्दनः ॥
अनयं तं मुनिर्दृष्टवा कोपात्कालानलप्रभः ।
नायमस्तीति सचिंत्य शशाप धृतराष्ट्रजम् ॥
अस्य दुर्नयगदस्य भेषज कुम्भभिन्नघटभाजि सयुगे ।
ऊरुभञ्जनविधौ भयङ्करो भीम एव भवतो भविष्यति ॥
इत्युद्वान्तमहाशापपावक कुपित मुनिम् ।
भीतः प्रसादयामास पुत्रस्नेहात्कुरूद्वहः ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 3,83-85,89,91-94.

Gāndhārī's *pātivratya* was so potent as the highest *tapasyā* of a *maharshi*, that, with the full knowledge of Krishṇa as Paramātmā himself, as even Dhritarāshṭra, Vyāsa, Bhīshma and others knew, and though so very objective as to lament for Abhimanyu's death as much as Subhadrā herself, and would not bless her own son Duryodhana with victory even at his earnest request, if he did not follow the path

of virtue, as she categorically pronounced that the victory was only for the side that adhered to righteousness, यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः *Mahābhārata*, yet being a woman and a mother, overwhelmed by grief by the annihilation of all her sons and an only son-in-law, she pronounced that, as being most capable of averting this calamity, Kṛishṇa had deliberately been indifferent to it with all his omniscience, either because of the necessity of total destruction or hatred or as a divine sport, his own entire family would perish in twentyfive years thence. Kṛishṇa smilingly welcomed it as inevitable, already assured by Kauśika and other sages, which was only now reiterated by her truthful utterance:

शक्तेनापि त्वया कृष्ण यस्मात्कामादुपेक्षितः ।
सर्वक्षयाद्वा द्वेषाद्वा सर्वज्ञेन च लीलया ॥
षड्विंशे वत्सरे प्राप्ते वृष्णीनां समरे मिथः ।
तस्मात्तवापि भविता विपुलो बान्धवक्षयः ॥.....
इत्युक्त्वा तारकरुणं रुरोद सुबलात्मजा ॥
तामुवाच हसन् कृष्णः स्वेच्छासृष्टलयोदयः ।
विधिनैतत्पुरादिष्टं पूनरुक्तं तवोदितम् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 12,74-77.

That the iron pestle with which the Vṛishṇis tried to fool the lustrous sages like Kauśika and others come to see Kṛishṇa at Dwārakā, by dressing up Sāmba as a pregnant girl, would end them as the sages pronounced could not be belied by even the supreme effort in reducing it into powder, even the dust luxuriantly growing into long reeds and stalks to help them to mutually kill themselves in drunken revelry:

तान्दृष्ट्वा कौशिकमुखान् प्रहर्षान्मदविप्लुताः ।
साम्बं कृत्वा वधूवेषं पप्रच्छुर्वृष्णिपुंगवाः ॥
अपि पुत्रः सुता वास्या भविष्यति मुनीश्वराः ।
तच्छ्रुत्वा तेऽवदन्नस्याः कुलमृत्युर्भविष्यति ॥
मुसलं ब्रह्मदण्डास्यमित्युक्त्वादर्शनं ययुः ।
लौहं साम्बस्ततोऽभूत मुसलं वज्रसंहतम् ॥
तदाह्वको भयात्पिष्ट्वा तूर्णं तत्याज सागरे ।.....
प्राक् तस्माद्वज्रमुसलात्प्रजातैर्वल्लरीचयैः ॥
तृणमप्यभवत्तत्र ब्रह्मदण्डमदोत्कटम् ॥

क्षयाय मुसलीभूतं सहसान्धकवृष्णिषु ।
याभूदापानभूस्तेषां ललनानयनोत्सवः ।।
सैव मृत्योरभूद्घोरसंहाराहारमण्डपः ।
साम्बे गते चारुदोष्णि प्रद्युम्ने कृतवर्मणि ।।
अनिरुद्धे च शंनेये निहते पश्यतो हरेः ।
वृत्ते वृष्णिक्षये घोरे स्त्रीशेषा यादवे कुले ।।
द्वारका प्ररुरोदेव छिन्नहराश्रुनिर्झरैः ।

Bhāratamañjarī 16,3-6,18-22.

The other preference of Taponitya, like Rāthītara for *satya*, was *tapas*. Penance was everything for him. This is also true because even to understand the Brahman, the Supreme One, Bṛighu, the son of Varuṇa is asked by Varuṇa to understand the Brahman only by penance:

तपसा ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासस्व । तपो ब्रह्मेति ।

And in various ways, as the *Taittirīya* puts it, he learnt first that *anna* was Brahma, as everything is born from *anna*, subsists on *anna* and goes back into *anna*. But not yet convinced he again goes to Varuṇa and Varuṇa repeats his guidance to help him to learn it by penance. He then understands that *prāṇa* is Brahma and again performs penance, this time to understand that *manas* is Brahma. The next time he understands through penance that *vijñāna* is Brahma and finally be concludes that the Supreme One is *ānanda* or bliss.

आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात् । आनन्दाद्धचेव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।
आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

Tattirīya Upanishad 3,1-6

This is the highest knowledge obtained from Varuṇa.

सैषा भार्गवी वारुणी विद्या ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 3,6.

This *ānanda* or bliss is elaborated in the second chapter of the *Taittirīya* in *Brahmānandavallī*. It starts from the smallest unit and proceeds up to *brahmānanda* itself, The *ānanda* of the Eternal One. The ideal of joy, alertness and confidence in accomplishing is the greatest in the ideal master of the universe, Dakshiṇāmurti Śiva, the

young teacher instructing the oldest and the most venerable of sages: *vriddhās śishyā gurur yuvā* — the ideal. This is the measure of human joy, *mānusha ānanda* a careful assessment infinitesimal fraction of the Supreme joy. The instance of earth is the one in the prime of youth, noble by disposition, intelligent and well read, up and alert, excellent in health and with physical stamina. For him the entire world is ladan with treasures, waiting to be accepted by him. This is the first unit in the measure of human joy:

> सैषाऽनन्दस्य मीमांसा भवति । युवा स्यात्साधुयुवाऽध्यापकः । आशिष्ठो द्रढिष्ठो बलिष्ठः । तस्येयं पृथिवी सर्वा वित्तस्य पूर्णा स्यात् । स एको मानुष आनन्दः ।
>
> *Taittirīya Upanishad* 2,8.

A hundred such make the bliss of *manushya gandharva*. The *śrotriya* i.e one born in a good Brāhmaṇa family, knowledgeable in the highest *brahmavidyā* after due *saṁskara upanayāna*, when free from all desires, has all this bliss and more. A hundredfold bliss of *mānusha gandharva* is one *devagandharva* bliss. The *śrotriya* has more of it. A hundredfold of the *pitṛis* of the eternal world (*chiraloka*), is again vouchsafed in greater proportion to the the *śrotriya*. A hundredfold of bliss of the *pitṛis* is one unit of the *ajānajāna devas* and this again is there for the *śrotriya* devoid of desires. A hundredfold again of this bliss is one of a *karmadeva*. The *śtrotriya* equally has it. A hundredfold of this again is of the highest celestials of celestials, *devas*. A hundred of this is the bliss of Indra, as well as of the desireless *śrotriya*. A hundred *ānandas* of Indra make up a unit of the bliss of Bṛihaspati and a hundred of this of Prajāpati. A hundredfold bliss of Prajāpati's *ānanda* makes up the *ānanda* of the supreme Brahman. This again is there for the *śrotriya* devoid of desires. It is ultimately the realisation of the great reality that the individual soul here is the same in the solar orb representing the Almighty, the monistic conception of the Highest, omnipresent and omniscient:

> ते ये शतं प्रजापतेरानन्दाः । स एको ब्रह्मण आनन्दः । श्रोत्रियस्य चाकामहतस्य । स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः । स य एवंवित् । अस्माल्लोकात्प्रेत्य.....एतमानन्दमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति ।
>
> *Taittirīya Upanishad* 2,8.

One who has realised the highest by penance reaches the sphere of *ānanda*.

They could create as already noticed a new heaven by *tapasyā*. There was nothing that was impossible to be done by *tapasyā*. Sītā herself threatens Rāvaṇa when he rails before her that she could reduce him to ashes by the power of her penance and the force of her truth but was abstaining because she had not a word from Rāma to use that penance:

असन्देशात्तु रामस्य तपसश्चानुपालनात् ।
न त्वा कुर्भि दशग्रीव भस्म भस्मर्हं तेजसा ॥

The same is repeated by Hanumān in another way when he is frightened whether he had burnt Sītā also in the flames of Lankā when he set the city on fire. He however feels reassured that by her worship of truth, by her great penance and single-minded devotion towards her lord Rāma, indeed she could burn even fire but surely fire could not injure her (Fig. 51):

तपसा सत्यवाक्येन अनन्यत्वाच्च भर्तरि ।
अपि सा निर्दहेदग्निं न तामाग्निः प्रधक्ष्यति ॥

We have in the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* the classical instance of *ṛishis* coming to Rāma seeking protection from the Rākshasas (Fig. 52). It is not that they were incapable of ending them by their curse empowered by the force of their penance. But when there was help readily available from the righteous king expected to protect them, they would conserve their power of penance and not waste it on trivial things. It is also known that the *dhārmik* king by protecting properly the saintly ones automatically received a fourth part of the merit of their penance. The sages themselves tell Rāma this truth, request him to see the hundreds of their corpses and skeletons, remains of the devastation of the cruel Rākshasas, and beg of him to help them:

यत्करोति परं धर्मं मुनिर्मूलफलाशनः ।
तत्र राज्ञश्चतुर्भागः प्रजा धर्मेण रक्षतः ॥.....
सोऽयं ब्राह्मणभूयिष्ठो वानप्रस्थगणो महान् ।
त्वन्नाथोऽनाथवद्राम राक्षसैर्वध्यते भृशम् ॥
एहि पश्य शारीराणि मुनीना भवितात्मनाम् ।
हृतानां राक्षसैर्घोरैर्बहूनां बहुधा वने ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 3,6,14-16.

When the *ṛishis* from the banks of Yamunā came to pray of Rāma to rid them of the depredations of the cruel demon Lavaṇa whose strength was enhanced by the trident that made him formidable, Kālidāsa makes it clear that though their sacrifices were destroyed by the Rākshasas, the embodiment of darkness and ignorance, they sought protection only of Rāma who was the sun of refuge. Indeed when Rāma was there they would not use the power of their penance to end the demon. It is only when there was no other protector available that they would draw on the resources of their penance which was itself mightier than the mightiest weapons in the form of their curse:

लवणेन विलुत्तेज्यास्तामिस्रेण तमभ्ययुः ।
मुनयो यमुनाभाजः शरण्यं शरणार्थिनः ॥
अवेक्ष्य राम ते तस्मिन्न प्रजह्नुः स्वतेजसा ।
त्राणाभावे हि शापस्त्राः कुर्वन्ति तपसो व्ययम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 15,2-3.

In fact Raghu himself as king and protector is described as asking Kautsa the disciple of sage Varatantu whether his three-fold penance by emaciating his body by fasts, strict silence and complete control of the mind, of such potency as to quail the heart of even Indra, is not frittered away by obstacles calling for its use:

कायेन वाचा मनसापि शश्वद्यत्संभृतं वासवधैर्यलोपि ।
आपद्यते न व्ययमन्तरायैः कच्चिन्महर्षेस्त्रिविधं तपस्तत् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5.5

But as occasion required the sages could spend their *tapasyā* on worthy projects. Vālmīki welcome Śatrughna and entertains him in royal fashion as he was on his way to destroy the demon Lavaṇa. This was by his power of penance:

तमृषिः पूजयामास कुमारं क्लान्तवाहनम् ।
तपःप्रभावसिद्धाभिर्विशेषप्रतिपत्तिभिः ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 15,12.

To avoid another such expenditure of hard earned penance of the sage, Satrughna avoided a halt at Vālmīki's hermitage on his way to Ayodhyā though it would have given him great joy to listen to the sweet song of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by the sons of Rāma that thrilled even the deer in the hermitage:

भूयस्तपोव्ययो मा भूद्वाल्मीकेरिति सोऽत्यगात् ।
मैथिलीतनयोद्गीतनि:स्पन्दभृगमाश्रमम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 15,37.

The classical instance of this kind of expenditure of *tapasyā* on the most lavish scale is Bharadvāja's hospitality to Bharata on his way to Chitrakūṭa to meet Rāma. Bharadvāja specially invited the prince to partake of his hospitality. Bharata, who had stationed his army far away from the penance grove to avoid any desecration of the holy atmosphere of the hermitages, trees, streams, all that was so sacred there, answered that he was already so lovingly welcomed as a guest arrived and there was nothing more to be done. But Bharadvāja smiled as he remarked that though he would be pleased with the simplest hermit's fare, it was the army that followed him that he desired to entertain properly and asked him to invite them all. By the power of his penance the sage called on Viśvakarmā, lokapālas like Indra, Varuna, and Kubera, Soma, rivers, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, Tumburu and others to make available water, cool, sweet like sugarcane juice, varieties of wine, trees yielding silken garments and golden jewels, ambrosial food in different forms to eat, munch, lick, suck, drink, listening to heavenly music and witnessing dance, enjoying cool breeze, showers of fragrant celestial flowers, mansions to sleep in and stables for the cavalry, elephantry and so forth:

अथोवाच भरद्वाजो भरतं प्रहसन्निव ।
जाने त्वां प्रीतिसंयुक्तं तुष्येस्त्वं येन केन चित ॥
सेनायास्तु तवैतस्या: कर्तुमिच्छामि भोजनम् ।
मम प्रीतिर्यथारुपा त्वमर्हो मनुजाधिप ॥.....
अग्निशालां प्रविश्याथ पीत्वाप: परिमृज्य च ।
आतिथ्यस्य क्रियाहेतोर्विश्वकर्माणमाह्वयत् ॥.....
आह्वये लोकपालाँस्त्रीन् देवान् शक्रमुखाँस्तथा ।
आतिथ्यं कर्तुमिच्छामि तत्र मे संविधीयताम् ॥
प्राक्स्रोतसश्च या नद्य: प्रत्यक्स्रोतस एव च ।
अपराश्चोदकं शीतमिक्षुकाण्डरसोपमम् ॥.....
आह्वये देवगन्धर्वान् विश्वावमुहहाहूहून् ।
तथैवाप्सरसो देवीर्गन्धर्वीश्चापि सर्वश: ॥.....
समस्तुम्बुरुणा सार्धमाह्वये सपरिच्छद: ॥
वनं कुरुषु यद्दिव्यं वासोभूषणपात्रवत् ।
दिव्यनारीफलं शश्वत्तत्कौवेरमिहैतु च ॥

इह मे भगवान् सोमो विधत्तामन्नमुत्तमम् ।
भक्ष्यं भोज्यं च चोष्यं च लेह्यं च विविधं बहु ॥.....
एवं समाधिना युक्तस्तेजसाप्रतिमेन च ।
शिक्षास्वरसमायुक्तं तपसा चाब्रवीन्मुनिः ॥.....
व्यस्मयन्त मनुष्यास्ते स्वप्नकल्पं तदद्भुतम् ।
दृष्ट्वातिथ्यं कृतं तादृग्भरतस्य महर्षिणा ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2,91,3-4,11-16,18-20,22,81,82.

Penance of this type was not so easily acquired. It had to be a very hard process in which one is completely oblivious of the self and surroundings, to this extent, that a whole anthill could spring up on the hermit performing penance, unware of all that is happening and completely lost in meditation (Fig. 53). Chyavana, son of Bhrighu, was in deep penance on the banks in the vicinity of a lake. He was so lost to the world that he had almost become a wooden post, yet full of lustre, and around him arose a huge anthill overgrown with a variety of creepers and, infested by swarms of ants, he appeared a clod of clay and nothtng else with no human semblance. A long time passed when Śaryāti the king of the realm companied by his women came near the lake to sport in this beautiful atmosphere of peace and calm. His only daughter of exquisite charm and beauty, decked in jewels that made her all the more bright and sprightly, wandered in the vicinity at will and was attracted by the anthill which she noticed with her companions. She gathered flowers and cut small boughs in bunches and blossoms. The *ṛishi* noticed her and from the inside of the anthill addressed her though she could not hear his voice. Looking into the anthill through the interstices she noticed the glow of his eyes which, however, she could not understand as human, and in a sense of curiosity she poked them. This angered the sage, the result of which became evident in the entire retinue of the king becoming helpless in the daily discharge of excretion. The king dismayed at such an occurrence, recollected the fact that the place was the abode of the most powerful and aged *ṛishi* Chyavana, enquired if anybody had offended him, and learning to the contrary, was in an ado as to what to do. The devoted daughter observing the sorrowful state of her parents explained how she had in the notion that they were glow-worms in the anthill put out the eyes of the sage. The king immediately rushed to where Chyavana was performing penance and begged

forgiveness with his hands brought together in reverence. The pacified sage explained to the king that the princess in the vanity of her unassailable beauty, high state, and pride to an extent had hurt him, but he would forgive her, accepting her as his dutiful wife to look after him. The king without a second thought gave her to him in wedlock. Sukanyā also, accepting the aged seer as her consort attended on him with the utmost devotion, both the fires and the guests to their hermitage, and pleased the sage immensely. Once, when she rose after her bath from the lake in her glory like a celestial nymph, the Aśvins, amazed at her beauty, enquired of her whereabouts and learnt she was Sukanyā, daughter of Śaryāti and wife of the sage Chyavana. How is it, you, lustrous like lightning, have been given to a husband, decrepit, so advanced in old age, who could neither protect you, nourish you, nor satisfy you as a husband. Do not waste your youth. Sukanyā retorted at once that her husband was divine in her eyes, and would not listen to their wicked talk, warning them not to repeat such words in future. Amazed at her constancy, they offered to make him a youth and requested her to choose one of them as her husband. She returned to Chyavana and narrated the whole episode. Chyavana agreed and reasured her that everything would go well. He entered the lake as directed and after a dip arose from it in celestial youthful glory. All the three looked alike. She meditated and prayed in her heart that she should be able to choose only her husband and succeeded. Chyavana also highly pleased with the Aśvins, granted them a boon and, by the power of his penance, he got them a share in the *soma* offering in sacrifices to which so far they were not entitled. That is again the glory of penance:

भृगोर्महर्षेः पुत्रोऽभूच्च्यवनो नाम भारत ।
समीपे सरसस्तस्य तपस्तेपे महाद्युतिः ॥.....
स वल्मीकोऽभवद्ऋषिर्लताभिरिव संवृतः ।
कालेन महता राजन् समाकीर्णः पिपीलिकैः ॥
तथा स संवृतो धीमान्मृत्पिण्ड इव सर्वशः ।.....
अथ दीर्घस्य कालस्य शर्यातिर्नाम पार्थिवः ।
आजगाम सरो रम्यं विहर्तुमिदमुत्तमम् ॥.....
एकैव च सुता सुभ्रूः सुकन्या नाम भारत ।.....
चंक्रम्यमाना वल्मीकं भार्गवस्य समासदत् ।.....
रूपेन वयसा चैव मदनेन मदेन च ।.....

ततः सुकन्या वल्मीके दृष्ट्वा भार्गवचक्षुषी ।.....
किं नु खल्विदमित्युक्त्वा निर्विभेदास्य लोचने ॥
अक्रुध्यत्स तया विद्धे नेत्रे परममन्युमान् ।
ततः शर्यातिसैन्यस्य शकृन्मूत्रे समावृणोत् ॥.....
पितरं दुःखितं दृष्ट्वा सुकन्येयमथाब्रवीत् ।
मयाटन्त्येह वल्मीके दृष्टं सत्त्वमभिज्वलत् ॥
खद्योतवदभिज्ञातं तन्मया विद्धमन्तिकात् ।
एतच्छ्रुत्वा तु वल्मीकं शर्यातिस्तूर्णमभ्ययात् ॥
तत्रापश्यत्तपोवृद्धं वयोवृद्धं च भार्गवम् ।.....
अज्ञानाद्बालया यत्ते कृतं तत् क्षन्तुमर्हसि ।
ततोऽब्रवीन्महीपालं च्यवनो भार्गवस्तदा ॥
अपमानादहं विद्धो ह्यनया दर्पपूर्णया ।.....
तामेव प्रतिगृह्याहं राजन् दुहितरं तव ।
क्षंस्यामीति महीपाल सत्यमेतद्ब्रवीमि ते ।.....
ददौ दुहितरं तस्मै च्यवनाय महात्मने ।.....
सुकन्यापि पतिं लब्ध्वा तपस्विनमनिन्दिता ।
नित्यं पर्यचरत्प्रीत्या तपसा नियमेन च ॥
अग्नीनामतिथीनां च शुश्रूषुरनसूयिका ।

Mahābhārata 3,122,1-29.

कस्य चित्त्वथ कालस्य त्रिदशावश्विनौ नृप ।
कृताभिषेकां विवृतां सुकन्यां तामपश्यताम् ॥
तां दृष्ट्वा दर्शनीयाङ्गां देवराजसुतामिव ।.....
इच्छाव भद्रे ज्ञातुं त्वां तत्त्वमाख्याहि शोभने ॥
ततः सुकन्या सव्रीडा तावुवाच सुरोत्तमौ ।
शर्यातितनयां वित्तं भार्यां मां च्यवनस्य च ॥.....
कथं त्वमसि कल्याणि पित्रा दत्ता गताध्वने ।.....
न देवेष्वपि तुल्यं हि त्वया पश्याव भाविनि ॥
अनाभरणसंपन्ना परमाम्बरवर्जिता ।
शोभयस्यधिकं भद्रे वनमप्यनलङ्कृता ॥.....
त्वमुपास्से ह कल्याणि कामभोगबहिष्कृतम् ॥
असमर्थं परित्राणे पोषणे तु शुचिस्मिते ।
सा त्वं च्यवनमुत्सृज्य वरयस्वैकमावयोः ॥.....
रताहं च्यवने पत्यौ मैवं मां पर्यशङ्कतम् ।
तावब्रूतां पुनस्त्वेनामावां देवभिषग्वरौ ।.....
युवानं रूपसंपन्नं करिष्यावः पतिं तव ॥
ततस्तस्यावयोश्चैव वृणीष्वान्यतमं पतिम् ।

एतेन समयेनैनमामंत्रय पतिं शुभे ।
सा तयोर्वचनाद्राजन्नुपसंगम्य भार्गवम् ॥
उवाच वाक्यं यत्ताभ्यांमुक्तं भृगुसुतं प्रति ।
तच्छ्रुत्वा च्यवनो भार्यामुवाच क्रियतामिति ॥
श्रुत्वा तदश्विनौ वाक्यं तस्यास्तत्क्रियतामिति ।
ऊचतू राजपुंत्री तां पतिस्तव विशत्वपः ॥
ततोऽम्भश्च्यवनः शीघ्रं रूपार्थी प्रविवेश ह ।
अश्विनावपि तौ राजन् सरः प्रविशतां तदा ॥
ततो मुहूर्तादुत्तीर्णाः सर्वे ते सरसस्तदा ।
दिव्यरूपधराः सर्वे युवानो मृष्टकुण्डलाः ॥
तुल्यवेषधराश्चैव मनसः प्रीतिवर्धनाः ।
तेऽब्रुवन् सहिताः सर्वे वृणीष्वान्यतमं शुभे ॥
अस्माकमीप्सितं भद्रे पतित्वे वरवर्णिनि ।.....
सा समीक्ष्य तु तान् सर्वास्तुल्यरूपधरान् स्थितान् ॥
निश्चित्य मनसा बुद्धचा देवी वव्रे स्वकं पतिम् ।
लब्ध्वा तु च्यवनो भार्यां वयो रूपं च वांछितम् ॥
हृष्टोऽब्रवीन्महातेजास्तौ नासत्याविदं वचः ।
यथाहं रूपसंपन्नो वयसा च समन्वितः ॥
कृतो भवद्भ्यां वृद्धः सन् भार्यां च प्राप्तवानिमाम् ।
तस्माद्युवां करिष्यामि प्रीत्याहं सोमपीथिनौ ।
मिषतो देवराजस्य सत्यमेतद्ब्रवीमि वाम् ॥

Māhābhārata 2,123. 1-24.

From this it is clear that penance had to be the highest austerity, and this austerity is to an extent seen in the emaciated form of the sages in sculpture (Fig. 54) and their attitude, स्थिरसुखमासनम् *Yogasūtra*, which defines the position or stance of the sage in meditation. That a whole anthill grew over a sage without his knowledge of it, is not a mere attitude of meditation, but is something of a length of time, the meditator completely oblivious of the surroundings, where the mind, undistracted, continues for ages in a *samādhi* which is fixed on the Supreme, *brahmalagna*. It is of this that the highest example is seen in the form of Śiva as *Yogi* (Fig. 55).

Janaka, even as a great *Rājaṛishi*, decply sighs, seated under a tree, and feels that in spite of all the mortifications of the body that he had been practising, it would not fall, and still would continue in spite of the grief that he experienced for the sorrow of his innocent

daughter Sītā abandened by Rāma, which, even for him, a philosopher, who had no attachment for anything, still terribly turmoils his mind. It is no doubt true that Janaka himself belonged to the spiritual class *Brahmavādins* who sought realisation of the soul and about whom there are so many touching anecdotes regarding their pursuit of knowledge, truth, the meaning of life, the Absolute, the One highest Factor, the great seers, like Yājñavalkya, the great preceptor in the court of Janaka whose objective was the discriminative understanding of the Ātman:

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः ।

Though a great seer who had realised the Absolute even though a ruling king, the *Rājarishi* Janaka, endowed with the greatest wisdom, living in the world but free from its shackles, and capable of maintaining composure even if and whenever Mithilā was in flames:

अनन्तं वत मे वित्तं यस्य मे नास्ति किंचन ।
मिथिलायां प्रदीप्तायां न मे दह्यति किंचन ॥

Mahābhārata 12,171,56.

had still a weak point in his sorrow for Sītā. Janaka cannot but recall in his mind his dear girl ever before his mind's eye as a little child with lotus face, now wreathed in a smile of innocence and now again in tears, revealing a few, just peeping, soft bud-like teeth, sweet in her prattle with the words faltering in a child's language scarcely understood:

अनियतरुदितस्मितं विराजत्कतिपयकोमलदन्तकुड्मलाग्रम् ।
वदनकमलकं शिशोः स्मरामि स्खलदसमञ्जसमञ्जु जल्पितं ते ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,4.

Janaka feels that his heart is terribly lacerated and in great pain by the great calamity that has befallen his beloved daughter, could never end, and being poignant, continually cuts through his vitals, like a sharp-toothed saw:

अपत्ये यत्तादृग्दुरितमभवत्तेन महता
विपक्तस्तीव्रेण व्रणितहृदयेन व्ययथता ।
पटुर्धारावाही नव इव चिरेणापि हि न मे
निकृन्तन्मर्माणि क्रकच इव मन्युर्विरमति ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,3.

He really wonders how already tortured by grief in extreme old age, himself practising most difficult penance like *parāka*, *sāntapana* and others, does not fall down dead. It is only because the *ṛishis* hold that those who commit suicide fall into those dark worlds rid of sunlight, *asūryā* and *andhatāmisrā*, a very great sin indeed, that he refrains from it. The rigour of *parāka* is such that the fasting is continuously for twelve days with the senses and mind under control. *Sāntapana*, *chāndrāyaṇa*, *kṛichchhra* and other penances are equally difficult but as a *Rājaṛishi*, somehow, he controls himself and, even though roused to anger towards Rāma for abandoning Sītā who was ever so innocent, he has no heart to harm him in the least by a curse, though Kausalyā fears and apprehends it. Even Vālmiki expresses his displeasure in this one unpardonable act as he considers it. Vālmīki feels that Rāma, even though the means of removing the sharp thorn of the three worlds, Rāvaṇa, though ever so true to his word and ever so humble, having been unnecessarily turbid in his attitude to Sītā courted his anger though it would not spurt:

उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञेऽप्यविकत्थनेऽपि ।
त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 14,73.

Paraśurāma after the sad demise of his father at the hands of a Kshatriya not only exterminated twentyone times the entire Kshatriya world but almost developed a nausea at the very sight of a Kshatriya. Even a saintly king Janaka and the best example of a *Rājaṛishi*, who was more a sage than a king appears almost as one to be avoided in the eyes of Paraśurāma. He cannot however help admiring Janaka, a king, of the highest discriminating intellect, protected in every way in *dharma* by his preceptor Śatānanda, son of Gautama and born of the Āṅgīrasa family, the sage Yājñavalkya, the great disciple of Sūrya himself expounding for him of the highest *brahmavidyā*:

स एष राजा जनको मनीषी पुरोहितेनाङ्गिरसेन गुप्तः ।
आदित्याशिष्यः किल याज्ञवल्क्यो यस्मै मुनिर्ब्रह्म परं विवव्रे ॥

Mahāvīracharita 2,43.

Paraśurāma's haughty talk insulting even to the highest *Brahmavādins* and *Brahmaṛishis* like Vaśishṭha and Viśvāmitra so angers Janaka that

though he had long given up the use of the bow, calls for it, so that he could use it if it came to it that Paraśurāma transcended his limits. The latter tauntingly addresses Janaka in that exasperated mood, and reminds him that, though his own valour was so great, he was still so respectful to him because of his exceptional great quality as the highest philosopher who had realised the Supreme. How could you talk so rudely without the least fear of the consequences, just because I am approaching you in all humility in accordance with the decorum due, considering that you are one possessed of knowledge of the Absolute, the Supreme Brahman, that you are so very aged, ever united with *dharma*, and that you have been instructed in the highest philosophy by that great sage who is the disciple of Sūrya:

त्वं ब्रह्मण्यः किल परिणतश्चासि धर्मेण युक्त-
स्त्वां वेदान्तेष्वचरमऋषिः सूर्यशिष्यः शशास ।
इत्याचारादसि यदि मया प्रश्रयेयणोपजुष्ट-
स्तर्क्ति रोषादविदितभयं कर्कशानि ब्रवीषि ॥

Mahāviracharita 3,26

The exposition of Yājñavalkya to Janaka and the long conversation between Sulabhā and Janaka, both in the *Anuśāsanaparva* are specially revealing in vividly presenting the greatness of Janaka. Yājñavalkya tells him that it is by the grace of Sūrya that this, his flowery speech, was vouchsafed to him. He explains that what is reached by *adhyātma* meditation, is the source of *adhibhūta*, free from the three *guṇas ,satva, rajas*, and *tamas* the unknowable and unswerving, peaceful, eternal, fixed, undiminishing and explained at length in Sāmkhya and Yoga, is experienced by those calm like the waveless ocean and know no fear:

अध्यात्मचिन्तागन्तव्यमादिभूते च कारणम् ।
गुणत्रयविनिर्मुक्तमक्षरं वेद्यवर्जितम् ॥
सांख्ययोगोदितं शान्तं शाश्वतं ध्रुवमव्ययम् ।
निस्तरङ्गोदधिनिभा युक्ताः पश्यन्ति निर्भयाः ॥
सूर्यप्रसादाद्वदनं प्रविष्टा मे सरस्वती ।
तयास्मि वेदकृद्भूत्वा सारमेव पदं श्रितः ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1066-1068.

The other episode, the conversation between Sulabhā and Janaka, is equally interesting, Sulabhā holding a triple rod *(tridaṇḍa)* as a nun,

with the distinction of one that had realised the Absolute, came to see Janaka in Mithilā, soaring on high in the sky. She however encountered him in the perfection of beauty and alluring youth, with the sheen in her body so attractive as to almost make her appear smeared with ambrosia. Janaka received and entertained her with honour. In his assembly she brightened up the entire atmosphere with her lustre, entered Janaka's body through her *yogic* power for a while and appeared almost somnolent. Janaka, aware of her mind *(bhāva)*, asked her who she was appearing like moonlight arising from the ambrosial ocean of the mind. I am the disciple of Pañchaśikha, the great sage of Sāmkhya, the greatest of the discriminating masters. I am a king, yet have attained ultimate liberation. I just wear the crown and jewels, allow the umbrella to be held over me and the *chaurīs* waved, though I have completely eliminated all desires. I live in my own penance grove of peace with my mind calm and collected in all that I do. Pañchaśikha has burnt up all my desires by initiating me into the knowledge of the Self. By the power of the seed of that knowledge no desire arises in me in any cognizable object. For me who am severely alone by myself, a house is neither for peace nor for bondage. For those who are untainted by anything, liberation can be everywhere and nowhere. How and why have you entered my body through your *yoga.* All confusion arises because of differential notions in caste, lineage, stages in life and others. If you want to overcome me, your mind may start on it. It is the fault of your own view in philosophy that you are touching me through your *yoga* i.e. occupying me in all my limbs, yourself being an avowed untainted woman (*satī*), and still you are not ashamed. Tell me the reason and speak the truth. So addressed in a severe tone, she never quailed, but, with a brow raised and a smile on her lips, she spoke though she had entered like a shade and stood before him in a great assembly of the best of men. Oh king! Being yourself one released from bondage, that you talk of a difference as existing between you and me does not appear right. You are asking me who and whence I am, questions that are meaningless. Have you not heard that all that is composed of elements is like a wooden toy. Thirty parts of *guṇas* compose the form of any object. For whom is it that this meaningful cycle does not exist? Thought of fertility continues till old age is reached like the lamp burning with its glow

till the oil is consumed. The body is not connected even with its own limbs as it is unconnected with the world itself, what to talk of the soul which is always free and which you see as if it were a reflection in a mirror. It appears strange that having attained liberation your question is based on differential notion. It appears like the garland of victory for the elephant that is struck on the battlefield. I consider that liberated as you feel continuing as a ruler of a vast kingdom, you are like one terribly tormented by heat in a desert but yet feeling no thirst. The *chaurīs* are still waved for you and you are covered by the umbrella. Fortune, by the waves of its pride, always destroys discrimination. Trivial matters, like an army lost on the battlefield or a prince killed, unfortunately create sorrow among kings. With wealth in the treasury, the elephants in the stables, the ministers in their mansions, the queen at one edge of the bed couch at night, you still think you are alone and apart. You imagine that your body is lying on the bed still breathing but quite apart from the golden bangles and necklace, your mind away from everything, and yet you run after things in dreams. I am a beggar woman having no house and myself void of everything. In this your body, I have just spent one night and what is wrong in that? Oh king! I have not touched your body but I have only occupied it by *yoga*. How do you know that I have touched you when you are free from all attachments? How can Pañchaśikha be your *guru*. You are afraid of the mixing up of *varṇas* (castes) and) *āśramas* (stations in life). The explanation given by you that the seed of knowledge cannot grow without the proper sprout from it is useless, as you are unable to see it properly in regard to objects of enjoyment. We are absolutely quite indivisible from the refugee and the refuge like the creeper on the tree, the flower on the creeper and bee on it. If you see difference anywhere it is only in your talk. Therefore in this difference which is only in a small part where is there a mix up in the entirety? You have neither relinquished action nor are you attuned to complete inaction; like Triśaṅku in midair you are neither in heaven nor on the earth. You are neither wholly mine nor am I completely yours. Not having reached this stage how do you Oh king! call yourself liberated. So admonished by the words of Sulabhā, Janaka, neither pleased nor unhappy, just kept silent:

त्रिदण्डधारिणी मुक्ता सुलभा नाम भिक्षुकी ।
मिथिलां जनकं द्रष्टुं पुरा प्रायाद्विहायसा ॥

यौवनाभरणं रूपं दधती स्म सुमध्यमा ।
ददर्श जनकं कान्ता लावण्यललिताकृतिः ॥.....
चक्रे समुचितां पूजां तस्यै पाद्यासनादिभिः ।.....
सभायां जनकं चक्रे रश्मिभिः स्वीकृतान्तरम् ।.....
तद्भावस्पृष्टभावोऽथ वभाषे दन्तकान्तिभिः ।
अयि चित्तसुधासिंधुचन्द्रिका कासि कस्य वा ॥.....
शिष्यः पञ्चशिखस्याहं सांख्यवेदविदो मुनेः ।
विवेकास्त्रविदां श्रेष्ठो मोक्षं प्राप्तो जनाधिपः ॥
किरीटी कङ्कणधरः छत्रव्यजनवाहनः ।
मुण्डितेच्छः शमारण्यो मनः कर्मप्रसादनः ॥
स्वन्तबोधकपालेऽस्मिन् प्लुष्टं पञ्चशिखेन मे ।
ज्ञानबीजस्य सामर्थ्याद्विषयेषु न जायते ॥
नैकान्तवासिता शान्त्यै न गेहं वन्धनाय च ।
सर्वत्र विहिता नाम मुक्तिर्निर्लेपचेतसाम् ॥
अन्तःप्रवेशः किमयं त्वया मे योगतः कृतः ।
वर्णगोत्राश्रामादीनां विभेदादेष सङ्करः ॥.....
अयं स्वशास्त्रदोषश्च तव स्पृशसि यत्परान् ॥
सर्वाङ्गसङ्गं कुरूपे सती भूत्वा न लज्जसे ।.....
इति पृष्टातिपरुषं न धैर्यात्संचचाल सा ।
ईषदुन्नमितैकभ्रूर्हासपल्लविताधरा ॥
सा वभाषे प्रविष्टापि छायेव पुरतः स्थिता ।.....
मुक्तश्च भेदवक्ता चेत्यहो राजन्न राजसे ॥
कासि कस्य कुतो वा त्वं यदेवमभिधीयते ।
तत्र किं न श्रुतं काष्ठजन्तुवद्व्रणभौतिकम् ॥
त्रिशद्व्रणकलाकारो व्यक्तो व्यक्तत्वमागतः ।
संघातस्तत्वचक्रस्य सोऽयं कस्य न कस्य वा ॥
शुक्रसेकाद्यवस्थास्ता न लक्ष्यन्ते जरावधि ।
दीपस्येवार्चिषो याता यस्य सोऽयं कुतः कथम् ॥.....
विकल्पं पृच्छतो नैषा मुक्तता तव शोभते ।.....
इदं राज्यमपर्यन्तं तिष्ठतस्ते विमुक्तता ॥
न मन्येऽहं मरुतटे तप्तस्येव वितृष्णता ।
चामरैर्लोलयन्त्येव छत्रैराच्छादयन्ति च ॥
विवेकं मदकल्लोलैर्हरन्ति च नृणां श्रियः ।.....
भिक्षुकी शून्यानिलया शून्येऽस्मिँस्तव विग्रहे ।
निवसामि क्षपामेकां का नु ते नृपते क्षतिः ॥
अस्पृशन्ती वपुस्तेऽहं प्रविष्टा यदि योगतः ।
तत्कथं नृपते मुक्तः स्पर्शं वेत्सि सरागवत् ॥.....

अविभिन्ना वयं सर्वे समाश्रयसमाश्रयात् ।
तरौ लता तत्र पुष्पं तस्मिन् षट्चरणा इव ॥
सर्वात्मना पृथक्त्वं चेदिति भागं विपश्यसि ।
तदेकान्तविभिन्नस्य कस्य केनात्र संकरः ॥
स त्वं प्रवृत्तिविमुखो न च प्राप्तो निवृत्तताम् ।
त्रिशङ्कुरिव मध्यस्थो न दिवं न भुवं श्रितः ॥.....
इत्यवाप्तोपदेशार्थः सुलभावचसा नृपः ।
न हृष्टो नाप्रहृष्टश्च तूष्णीं नभ इवाभवत् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1071-1105.

Such a *Rājaṛishi* as Janaka himself could be counted Bhīshma, the one who acted but without the least desire for any fruit of action and with the highest ideals and aims in his life. Another *Rajaṛishi*, the famous contemporary of Janaka was Ajātaśatru, the king of Kāśī who had also realised the Supreme and who could teach even the great *Brahmavādin* Dṛiptabālāki of the Garga family, though it was very rare that a Brāhmaṇa *Brahmavādin* would learn from a Kshatriya. This is one of the rare instances, as Ajātaśatru could instruct him and he did it:

स होवाच अजातशत्रुः । प्रतिलोभं चैतद्यद्ब्राह्मणः क्षत्रियमुपेयात् ।
ब्रह्म मे वक्ष्यतीति । व्येव त्वाज्ञापयिष्यामीति ।

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 2,1,15.

For such supreme *ṛishis* of the highest order, *Rājaṛishis*, *Brahmaṛishis*, *Maharishis*, the highest example however has been Śiva as the supreme ascetic. Sages generally shown deeply lost in penance in sculpture reflect this glory. Not only at Mahābalipuram, where the *ṛishis* lost in meditation have been graphically pictorially portrayed (Fig. 54), but the picture of Śiva as Yogeśvara both at Elephaṇṭā (Fig. 55) and Ellora, is a commentary as it were on the striking description given by Kālidāsa of Śiva in meditation, the disturbance of which by Manmatha caused him his life. Śiva as Yogeśvara has been idealised as the most unruffled, seated erect in penance in *vīrāsana* with the *yogāpaṭṭa* holding his legs in position, his shoulders bent and his hands palm upward placed in his lap like lotuses together:

पर्यङ्कबन्धस्थिरपूर्वकायं ऋज्वायतं संनमितोभयांसम् ।
उत्तानपाणिद्वयसन्निवेशात्प्रफुल्लराजीवमिवाङ्कमध्ये ॥

Kumārasambhava 3,45.

In Śiva's penance is represented the supreme example of the highest

mahāpurusha in action, not to gain anything by an act of his, but just to set an example for others to follow:

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किं चन।

as Kṛishṇa would put it in the *Gītā* 3,22. Kālidāsa has voiced this in his line that describes him as concentrating only on himself

यमक्षरं क्षेत्रविदो विदुस्तमात्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तम्।

Kumārasambhava 3,50

as there was nothing apart from him स्वातिरेकेण परमात्मनोऽभावात् as the commentator Mallinātha explains. It is to set an example to the world; and Kālidāsa is eloquent in describing this magnificent ascetic form of Śiva, Yogeśvara. It has inspired not only the poetry of the sweetest of Indian poets but also inspired the chisel of the greatest Vākāṭaka sculptor at Elephaṇṭā where a masterpiece represents this situation, with his hands so placed, the palms resting one over the other, simulating a lotus pair in bloom, with the *yogapaṭṭa* on his leg, the torso stretched up, the reptile string holding together the mass of locks tied up, the beads of the rosary twisted around the ear, with dark antelope skin across his chest and shoulder tied up in a knot, and made a shade darker by the blue light emitted from his throat, the brows still, the pupils of the eye bright but steady, the eyelids unstirring but the sight concentrated downwards on the tip of the nose, like a laden cloud in no storm to rain, like the very receptacle of waters the ocean unruffled by ripply waves, but with the inner life breath under perfect control, not unlike the flame of the lamp unagitated by the wind itself at standstill, lighting up, as it were, the beauty of the crescent form of the infant moon, more delicate than a lotus fibre, by the rays shooting up from his head through the interstices of the hollows of the eye sockets of the skull adorning his crest, with his mind diverted from all the nine outlets of the sensory organs and fixed on the heart in ascetic trance, contemplating and viewing in himself the highest that the noblest seers have sought. That is Śiva who is the great ascetic, the unique example for *yoga* itself:

पर्यङ्कबन्धस्थिरपूर्वकायं ऋज्वायतं संनमितोभयांसम्।
उत्तानपाणिद्वयसन्निवेशात्प्रफुल्लराजीवमिवाङ्कमध्ये॥
भुजङ्गमोन्नद्धजटाकलापं कर्णावसक्तद्विगुणाक्षसूत्रम्।
कण्ठप्रभासङ्गविशेषनीलं कृष्णत्वचं ग्रन्थिमतीं दधानम्॥

किंचित्प्रकाशस्तिमितोग्रतारैर्भ्रूविक्रियायां विरतप्रसङ्गैः ।
नेत्रैरविस्पन्दितपक्ष्ममालैर्लक्ष्यीकृतघ्राणमधोमयूखैः ॥
अवृष्टिसंरम्भमिवाम्बुवाहमपामिवाधारमनुत्तरङ्गम् ।
अन्तश्चराणां मरुतां निरोधान्निवातनिष्कम्पमिव प्रदीपम् ॥
कपालनेत्रान्तरलब्धमार्गैर्ज्योतिःप्ररोहैरुदितैः शिरस्तः ।
मृणालसूत्राधिकसौकुमार्या बालस्य लक्ष्मीं ग्लपयन्तमिन्दोः ॥
मनो नवद्वारनिषिद्धवृत्ति हृदि व्यवस्थाप्य समाधिवश्यम् ।
यमक्षरं क्षेत्रविदो विदुस्तमात्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तम् ॥

Kumārasambhava 3,45-50.

In the expression of the glory of *tapasyā* and control of senses, the sculpture of Devī amidst the five fires, so vividly depicted in the Rāmeśvara Cave at Ellora (Fig. 56) and in other representations elsewhere, stands out very prominent (Fig. 57). It is indeed a sculptor's version of Kālidāsa's remarks put in the words of Pārvatī, that concentration and penance were the only means of rendering her extraordinary beauty fruitful, as she was convinced that without the highest aid of asceticism her beauty was of no avail:

इयेष सा कर्तुमवन्ध्यरूपतां समाधिमास्थाय तपोभिरात्मनः ।

Kumārasambhava 5,2.

The sculpture represents her carrying the holy water pot (*kamaṇḍalu*) and the Palāśa stick (*daṇḍa*) wearing the antelope skin (*kṛishṇājina*) as the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*). It is a telling carving of the word picture of Kālidāsa describing her as emerging from the bath in the stream, completing her adoration of the fire by appropriate offerings, chanting the holy *Veda*, attired in the antelope skin as upper garment, with aged sages arrived to meet her, as age counts for nothing among those that have the greatest spiritual experience and naturally are the most senior in knowledge of *dharma:*

कृताभिषेकां हुतजातवेदसं त्वगुत्तरासङ्गवतीमधीतिनीम् ।
दिदृक्षवस्तां ऋषयोऽभ्युपागमन्न धर्मवृद्धेषु वयः समीक्ष्यते ॥

Kumārasambhava 5,16.

Here penance amidst five fires, a favourite theme in sculpture, is described by Kālidāsa. Centrally stationed amidst four blazing fires, and with immaculate smile on her face, expressive of her cool feeling towards the blaze of the fire, the slender-waisted beauty overcame the blinding light of even the sun; and concentrating her eye ever on the solar orb, she overcame thus the blinding light of in-

fatuation, thus absorbing the highest light from the sun, the light of supreme knowledge:

शुचौ चतुर्णां ज्वलतां हविर्भुजां शुचिस्मिता मध्यगता सुमध्यमा ।
विजित्य नेत्रप्रतिघातिनीं प्रभामनन्यदृष्टिः सवितारमैक्षत ॥
Kumārasambhava 5,20.

It was not only the *kāyakleśa* or the complete disregard for even the creature comforts for the body which was put to a rigorous discipline of experiencing excruciating pain caused by heat and cold, but also by a gradual giving up of even the minimum food to sustain the body. While the most rigorous asceticism allowed at least the partaking of a few leaves as a simple fare to keep alive the means of winning *dharma*,

शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम् *Kumārasambhava* 5,33,

though delicately nurtured earlier, she went beyond the zenith of the highest act of penance where the food of the sages was restricted to just a few dried fallen leaves, and having given up even these, the sweet-spoken princess acquired fame being appropriately styled by the aged seers Aparṇā, the one who discarded even leaves:

स्वयंविशीर्णद्रुमपर्णवृत्तिता परा हि काष्ठा तपसस्तया पुनः ।
तदप्यपाकीर्णमतः प्रियंवदां वदन्त्यपर्णेति च तां पुराविदः ॥
Kumārasambhava 5,28.

Pārvatī's *tapasyā* is almost recalled in the penance contemplated by Sītā abandoned by Rāma, who thinks of her eye fixed on the sun in complete contemplation, her desire, the great *pativratā* that she is, being, in spite of the almost apparent injustice to her by Rāma, that the fruit of her severe penance may in her next birth also secure Rāma alone as her consort with no further separation from him as it had now occurred:

साहं तथा सूर्यनिबद्धदृष्टिरूर्ध्वं प्रसूतेश्चरितुं यतिष्ये ।
भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेपि त्वमेव भर्त्ता न च विप्रयोगः ॥
Raghuvaṁśa 14,66.

The *nāndīśloka* of the *Mṛichchhakaṭika* describing Śiva in *samādhi* is an eloquent picture of Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti. This is a close parallel of Yogeśvara described by Kālidāsa. Śūdraka pictures it as the form of Śiva that protects the universe as he sits in *yogic* stance, with the long snake wrapped up twice around his knees in the *paryaṅka*

yogapaṭṭa, with his life breath suspended, the action of all the sensory organs completely at a standstill and conscious of naught else except the unique truth of vision by which he perceives himself, the universal soul, in himself, pervading the universe, his physical vision blank:

पर्यङ्कग्रन्थिबन्धद्विगुणितभुजगाश्लेषसंवीतजानो-
रन्तः प्राणावरोधव्युपरतसकलज्ञानरुद्धेन्द्रियस्य ।
आत्मन्यात्मानमेव व्यपगतकरणं पश्यतस्तत्वदृष्ट्या
शम्भोर्वः पातु शून्येक्षणघटितलयब्रह्मलग्नः समाधिः ॥

The painter, in depicting this beautiful situation of Śiva lost in penance as Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti has made him also look not only at his own self, which cannot escape the immanent that is everywhere, but also in that train, as part of himself, the highest dance of *apsarasas*. This is the painting of Yoga-Dakshiṇāmūrti (Fig. 58) from the Choḷa series of murals in the Rājarājeśvara Temple at Tañjāvur. He is the great dancer, lord of dance, the propagator of dance and connoisseur of dance as well by appreciating the nuances of the art practised by others like the celestial nymphs. The *Vishṇudharmottara* lays down that *nāṭya* like *saṅgīta* is a great mode of *ārādhanā* of the lord, and Śiva is never so pleased as when

Fig. 58 Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti watching *Apsarasas* dance, Choḷa, 1000 A.D., Rājarājeśvara Temple, Tañjāvur.

he is worshipped by an offering of the best in *nāṭya*:

सोऽपि तुष्यति नृत्तेन सम्यगाराधितो हर: ।

Vishṇudharmottara 3,34,23

It is not only this. *Nṛitta* is supposed to be a greater offering to the Almighty than flowers, food, incence and other offerings:

पुष्पनैवेद्यदानेभ्यो नृत्तदान विशिष्यते ।

Vishṇudharmottara 3,34,25.

The importance of dance is given in this that one who can by himself dance and offers it has really achieved that highest worship. The offering of music, vocal and instrumental, and dance assures the highest fruit attained by the performance of sacrifice, assuring the fulfilment of even impossible desires. But, livelihood through dance and drama was looked down on and, though the professional commanded very little respect, the connosseur who offered his knowledge of dance for the glory of God was assured *moksha* or the attainment of liberation itself:

स्वय नृत्तेन य: कुर्याद्देवदेवस्य पूजनम् ।
विशेषेण महाभाग तस्य तुष्यति केशव: ॥
नृत्त गीत तथा वाद्यं दत्वा देवाय विष्णवे ।
सर्वकामसमृद्धस्य यज्ञस्य फलमश्नुते ॥
नृत्तेन वृत्ति य: कुर्यात्स तु वर्ज्यं. प्रयत्नत: ।
कुशीलवाद्यै र्य: कुर्यान्नृत्तविक्रयकारक ॥
देवताराधन कुर्याद्यस्तु नृत्तेन धर्मवित् ।
स सर्वकामानाप्नोति मोक्षोपाय च विन्दति ॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3,34,26-29.

While Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti emphasises concentration, where one is completely oblivious of physical surroundings and the attention is diverted to a single object, as in the case of Arjuna who could see not even the total fish but only the eye that he was to shoot, Naṭarāja represents the concentration in dance as one of the offerings to the Almighty, where again wholehearted concentration would need the dancer oblivious in regard to every other object around him, as he is lost in his own world of expression in the language of *abhinaya*, through *hastas*, *karaṇas* and *aṅgahāras* or in rhythmic pattern of dance *nritta*, where *tāla* and *laya* dominate (Fig. 59).

Again as Vīṇādhara he is Dakshiṇāmūrti, the presiding deity

over music, which is also a path for the utmost concentration and attainment of the fruit of the worship of the Lord, i.e. *moksha*. This has been clearly expressed by Tyāgarāja in one of his songs (*kṛitis*), *mokshamu kaladā*. While in this, *rāga* and *pāṭhya* text matter, in the Mṛidaṅga Dakshṇāmūrti aspect of Śiva, it is rather *tāla* and *laya*. There are a number of fine examples of Vīṇādhara Dakshiṇāmūrti. To the earliest Choḷa phase of art belongs the one from the Mūvar Temple at Koḍumbāḷur. The most lovely one of this form is the seated one from the Rāmeśvara cave at Ellora belonging to the fifth century and created by a great Vākāṭaka sculptor (Fig. 60). Mṛidaṅga Dakshiṇāmūrti has representation in a Rāshṭrakūṭa sculptor's creation in the Kailāsa temple at Ellora (Fig. 61); and a unique early Pāṇḍyan sculpture from the rock-cut temple at Kaḷugumalai proclaims the appreciation of the theme by a Pāṇḍyan sculptor (Fig. 62).

Śiva as Medhā Dakshiṇāmūrti (Fig. 63) represents the acme of the intellect that leads on to the highest truth or *parā vidyā* that opens the floodgates of *jñanā*. Here his hand in *chinmudrā* itself represents the supreme knowledge. It answers the Vedic prayer,

स मेऽन्द्रो मेधया स्पृणोतु । मेधां म इन्द्रो दधातु मेधां देवी सरस्वती ।

Nārāyanīyāyājñikyupanishad.

In this form Śiva is to be likened to the highest *guru* who opens the eye, not the physical eye but the spiritual eye:

चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

This form is mentioned in the *Śatarudrīya* as *Upavītine* as *yajñopavīta* is worn in the *vastra yajñopavīta* form mainly by Dakshiṇāmūrti. The whole concept of Dakshiṇāmūrti is to emphasise the highest *jñana*, the *medhā* of Dakshiṇāmūrti revealed by *mauna*, silence, that imparts everything even to the oldest seers, themselves repositories of learning:

वपिष्ठान्तेवसदृषिगणैरावृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः ।
आचार्येन्द्रं करकलितचिन्मुद्रमानन्दरूपं
स्वात्मारामं मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ॥

Dakshiṇāmūrtistotra.

It is describing this form that Śaṅkara brings in the parable of *sarpa* and *rajju* for the world, the dream and the awakened state, when alone, as after the attainment of supreme knowledge, the reality

that it was all earlier a dream is realised and then readily comprehended:

यः साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाव्ययं
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

Dakshiṇāmūrtistotra. 1

Just as Śiva as Vīṇādhara is example for concentration on the Lord through *rāga* and *tāla,* Naṭarāja, through *nāṭya. abhinaya* and *bhāva,* Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti is the model for concentration on the inner self bv the control of senses:

आत्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तम्

Kumārasambhava 3,50.

आत्मन्यात्मानमेव व्यपगतकरणं पश्यतस्तत्वदृष्ट्या

Mṛichchhakaṭika 1,1

The third preference according to the understanding of Brahman as the highest is voiced in the opinion of Nāka, son of sage Mudgala, that *svādhyāya* and *pravachana,* learning and imparting of knowledge of the *Vedas* and the great truth revealed in them is the highest: and that he feels is *tapasyā* that reveals the Supreme One Brahma, *tapas* that is the means of attaining the eternal:

स्वाध्यायप्रवचने एवेति नाको मौद्गल्यः । तद्धि तपस्तद्धि तपः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9.

The importance of *svādhyāya* and study has been sufficiently stressed almost everywhere.

Svādhyaya or Vedic study is as a duty to be accomplished without the expectation of any return from the knowledge. Medicine engineering, political seience, music, dance, sculpture, painting and other professional subjects studied with a worldly purpose of livelihood are different from the *Veda,* the study of which leads to the highest goal of the realisation of the self in relation to the Infinite. That is why it is laid down that a Brāhmaṇa should just for its own sake study the *Veda* with its correct intonation and understand its connotation:

ब्राह्मणेन निष्कारणो धर्मः षडङ्गो वेदोऽध्येयो ज्ञेयश्च ।

Yāska the author of the ancient work *Nirukta* on the exegesis of the *Vedas* has categorically mentioned not only the importance of the *svara* or intonation but also the knowldge of the import of the text.

One who has studied the *Veda* but knows not its import becomes just a pillar supporting its weight. Only that one who understands its meaning enjoys the good in it, and with his sins washed away by the true understanding goes to heaven. Whatever is learnt without understanding it is just sound uttered, and like dry twigs placed on an altar without fire can never flame up. Seeing the utterance he yet does not see it. Hearing it he yet hears it not. But to the other the speech reveals herself like the well-dressed wife displaying her body to her consort. Lovingly long drunk deep, uncomprehended, it helps him not either as food, but only serves the illusion of a cow him who hears speech without comprehending its flower and fruit:

स्थाणुरयं भारहारः किलाभूदधीत्य वेदं न विजानाति योऽर्थम् ।
योऽर्थज्ञ इत्सकलं भद्रमश्नुते नाकमेति ज्ञानविधूतपाप्मा ॥
यद्गृहीतमविज्ञातं निगदेनैव शब्द्यते ।
अनग्नाविव शुष्कैधो न तज्ज्वलति कर्हि चित् ॥
उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचं उत त्वः शृण्वण् न शृणोत्येनाम् ॥
उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विसस्रे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ॥
उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नैनं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु ।
अधेन्वा चरति माययैव वाचं शुश्रुवामफलामपुष्पाम् ॥

Nirukta 1,18,19.

To understand the arrangement and contexts of the *Veda* itself, with its division of *maṇḍalas*, *anuvākas*, seers and *sūktas* (divisions, sections and hymns), knowledge of the seer (*ṛishi*) deity (*devatā*) and metre *(chhandas*) was necessary, and it was therefore laid down that one who taught or uttered the text without knowing the respective *ṛishi*, *chhandas* and *daivata* got polluted by sin:

अविदित्वा ऋषिं छन्दो दैवतं योगमेव च ।
योऽध्यापयेज्जपेद्वापि पापीयान् जायते तु सः ॥

This is further explained. The *ṛishi's* utterance is the text. What is described in it is the *devatā*. The measure of letters composing it is

chhandas. The *ṛishis* who were keen after proper understanding of the text ran after the knowledge of the *devatās* and *chhandas*:

यस्य वाकंच स ऋषिः । या तेनोच्यते सा देवता । यदक्षरपरिमाणं
तच्छन्दः । अर्थेप्सव ऋषयो देवताच्छन्दोभिरुपधावत ।

Sarvānukramaṇī

The study of *Vedāṅgas*, particularly grammer, *(vyākaraṇa)* prosody *(chhandas)*, etymology (*nirukta*) was for a clear comprehension of the import of the *Vedas*. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita righly remarks when he says with amazement that there are so many themes in the *Vedas*, equally numerous are *śākhās* or divisions of the *Vedas*, and, their finale in the *Upanishads* is itself multifarious and multiform. How many may ever and in how many lives to be born over and over again can gain that mastery of the language to understand the import of the *Vedas* complctely baffling comprehension:

एकैकवेदविषया: ऋति नाम शाखास्तासां शिरांसि कतिनाम पृथग्विधानि ।
अर्थावबोधविधुरो ऽ क्षरलाभ एव केषां नृणा कतिभिरस्तु शरीरबन्धैः ॥

Ānandasāgarastava 8.

The importance of *svara* or intonation is so great that it is held that a *mantra* or hymn uttered with defect in intonation or even the letters composing it, at once becomes misused and no more conveys its true import; not only that, it becomes a thunderbolt of speech and strikes the very sacrificer, like when the *mantra* commencing '*indra-śatruḥ*' was mispronounced in regard to its intonation:

मन्त्रो हीन. स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तमर्थमाह ।
स वाग्वज्रो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रु. स्वरतोऽपराधात् ॥

Ṛig Upodghāta

Svādhyāya comes up appropriately in the context of young *ṛishis*, *ṛishikumāras*, expected to lead the life of impeccable *brahmacharya* to acquire the supreme knowledge of the *Veda*. A sculpture of Agni now in the Cleveland Museum is unique from the point of view of the life of *brahmacharya* devoted to *svādhyāya* or the study of the *Veda*. The life of the *brahmachārī* is probably nowhere so well represented as here in panels one below the,other on either side of the figure of Agni, giving scenes from the life of the disciple (Fig 64). In

this the position of the pupil in the presence of the master(*guru*) is well represented. He sits on a less eelevated seat than his master, with his hands in an attitude of obedience, and the *guru* holds his hand in the attitude of teaching. The *brahmāñjali* of the pupil, the palms held together, as if to receive or offer flowers, is to respectfully receive the tiny drops of saliva from the mouth at the time of the utterance of the *Veda* which are so holy that their fall on the ground is thus avoided. This is an indication of how reverentially he receives *brahmavidyā*, the knowledge offered by the master. His dress should be as simple as his heart pure:

ब्रह्माञ्जलिकृतोऽध्याप्यो लघुवासा जितेन्द्रियः ।

Manusmṛiti 2,70

Before and after his studies, the student is expected to bow to the master and in that process repeat his name, and his lineage (*pravara*) and the branch of *Veda* (*charaṇa*) that he studies: and in so doing, touch the feet of the master, crossing his hands, so that the right hand touches the right foot of the teacher and the left the left. This is the most respectful way of obeisance and is graphically presented in the sculpture the significance of which is best understood when one brings to one's mind the verse of Manu on this point:

ब्रह्मारम्भेऽवसाने च पादौ ग्राह्यौ गुरोः सदा ।
संहत्य हस्तावध्येयं स हि ब्रह्मांजलिः स्मृतः ॥
व्यत्यस्तपाणिना कार्यमुपसंग्रहणं गुरोः ।
सव्येन सव्यः स्प्रष्टव्यो दक्षिणेन च दक्षिणः ॥

Manusmṛiti 2,71-72.

Even the salutation *(vandana)*, *sāshṭāṅga praṇāma*, as it is known to the minute detail of the proper hand touching the proper foot during the utterance of the *charaṇa* and *pravara*, is well portrayed in the sculpture. This mode of crossing the hands is known as *hastasvastika* and *hastasvastika* not in dance, but in *anushṭhāna*. The simple dress, the low seat, *brahmāñjali* are all the rites, which included *samidādhāna* or offering of twigs in the fire. Here however *ājyahoma* or *homa* with ghee, which normally was not done by the *brahmachārin* but only by the *gṛihastha* is also depicted. The *brahmachārin* is shown with *ājyapātra*, pouring ghee in the fire, in doing the *purṇāhuti*,

सप्त ते अग्ने समिधः सप्त जिह्वाः सप्त ऋषयः सप्त धाम प्रियाणि
सप्त होत्राः सप्तधा त्वा यजान्ति सप्त योनीरापृणस्व घृतेन स्वाहा ।

Taittirīya Samhitā 1,5,3.

This *ājyāhuti* offering of ghee in the fire, with the boy shown a little grown up and significantly in the panel, is to indicate his daily *karma* as a newly married *gṛihastha* after *samāvartana* or the *brahmachārī's* return home to become a householder, including the *vasordhārā* stream of ghee poured as the finale after the usual *pākayajña* or the householder's sacrifice to be distinguished from *paśubandha* which is not a daily rite but only occasional. This sculpture thus represents the *brahmachārī's* life till he enters *gārhasthya*, after the *guru*, in his joy at the successful completion of the education of his disciple, has permitted him the second stage of life.

The tending of the fire by performing *samidādhāna*, procuring food by *bhikshā* and attendance on the *guru*,

दूरादाहृत्य समिधः संनिदध्याद्विहायसि ।
सायं प्रातश्च जुहुयात्ताभिरग्निमतन्द्रितः ॥
अकृत्वा भैक्षचरणमसमिध्य च पावकम् ।
अनातुरः सप्तरात्रमवकीर्णव्रतं चरेत् ॥

Manusmṛiti 2,186-187,

are the prescribed duties of the *Brahmachārin*:

अग्नीन्धनं भैक्षचर्यमधःशय्यं गुरोर्हितम् ।
आसमावर्तनात्कुर्यात्कृतोपनयनो द्विजः ॥

Manusmṛiti 2,108.

Āchamana, or sipping of the of water, which is one of the most common practices preceding and succeeding every daily item like the bath, *sandhyā*, meals, and so fourth, has sculptural representation in the panels depicting Gaṅgāvisarjanamūrti, from Ellora, where Jahnu sips up Gaṅgā in one *āchamanīya*. The feeding of the pupils after the *mādhyandina sandhyā* is represented in a long Gupta frieze from Garhwā in the Lucknow Museum (Fig. 65) depicting the events of the day from dawn to dusk.

In the case of the hermit boys (*ṛishikumāras*), the disciples after the *upanayana*, conducting the boy unto the master,

गृह्योक्तकर्मणा येन समीपं नीयते गुरोः।
बालो वेदाय तद्योगाद्बालस्योपनयं विदुः॥

was the essential *samskāra* which was as it were the background for the discipline set for study itself (Fig. 66). That is why the word *vinaya* is used for study, and even Buddha has a holy *piṭaka* book on the discipline for the monks which is a teaching, *Vinayapiṭaka*. Raghu enquires of Kautsa, the disciple of sage Varatanta, whether the sage, pleased with his performance in studies and conduct, having properly instructed him in the highest learning — the word used here is *vinīta* in the phrase *samyag vinīya* very well trained in utmost humility — permitted him to become a householder, as it was the proper time for him to enter the second stage of life which was the most serviceable to the entire community:

अपि प्रसन्नेन महर्षिणा त्व सम्यग्विनीयानुमतो गृहाय।
कालो ह्ययं संक्रमितुं द्वितीयं सर्वोपकारक्षममाश्रमं ते॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5,10.

Snāna, *sandhyā*, *sūryopasthāna* and *japa* are very important in *nitya-karmānushṭhāna* daily ritual. The *Dharmaśāstras* have laid great stress on the personal conduct and cleanliness of man from morning till night. His every action is governed by laws of cleanliness and godliness. It is these that constitute what is known as *āchāra*. A study of the *Dharmaśāstra* is very interesting for understanding the daily routine of man as it was conceived and followed. There are several sculptures in India and in islands and countries on the sea, like Java, Bali, Ceylon, Malaya and Cambodia which throw great light on some of these *sadāchāras*.

At Mahābalipuram a large boulder fully carved with the theme of Arjuna's penance has a portion of it very significant for understanding the life of sages and hermit boys, *munikumāras* (Fig. 67). We can learn so much about *snāna*, *sandhyā*, *sūryopasthāna* and *japa* from this. The scene is laid on the banks of the Gaṅgā suggested by carvings of Nāgas and Nāginīs in human form with hoods over their heads. On the banks of the river, there are *ṛishikumāras* shown having

their bath. One of them has finished his bath and is wringing his cloth of the water in it. To understand this we should see the context in the *smṛiti* and *gṛihyasūtras* about *vāsodaka*. Another has filled his pot with water to be taken to the hermitage for the daily *pūjā*. The significance of the water of the river in the vicinity of the hermitage for easy carriage for different religious purposes is given by Kālidāsa in his verse,

निर्वर्त्यते यैर्नियमाभिषेको येभ्यो निवापाञ्जलयः पितॄणाम् ।
तान्युञ्छषष्ठाङ्कितसैकतानि शिवानि वस्तीर्थजलानि कच्चित् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5,8.

where he describes Raghu enquiring of Kautsa whether the holy water in their river fared well, water which was meant for the ritual of daily ablutions performed, and for handfuls offered to the manes, the sandy dunes of which were marked by a sixth part of corn gleaned as *bali* or offering to the state. It may be recalled that elsewhere, the sixth parth of gleaned coarse grain was offered by even the sages to the state regularly as *bali*.

Another *Munikumāra* has his hands raised up and clasped in an attitude known as *yamapāśamudrā*, to see the sun through the aperture so created by interlocking the fingers in that manner. This is the usual mode during the *sūryopasthāna* after the *mādhyandinasandhyā*, *sandhyā* worship at midday, and incidentally it also points to the time of the day. By this device the sculpture interestingly indicates not only the time but also the particular *sandhyā* which is performed. The next stage in the performance of *sandhyā* is suggested in the figure of another *munikumāra* close by, who is bowing to the four directions standing with his hands in *añjali*, saying

सन्ध्यायै नमः, सावित्र्यै नमः, गायत्र्यै नमः, सरस्वत्यै नमः

facing east, south, west and north respectively. The *ṛishis*, several of whom are shown seated in the vicinity of a shrine of Vishṇu, some of them with the *yogapaṭṭa* tied around their legs, some in *yogāsana*, according to their taste and convenience, are all of them engaged in *tapas* and *japa*. This sculpture is all the more significant when we compare them with the attitude of *ṛishis* described by Kālidāsa in his

Kumārasambhava in a similar context.

The river, with its hundreds of immaculate waves darting high seems almost to proclaim to the denizens of heaven the glory of a look at the Gaṅgā, the dip in it and the sip of its water, The sandy dunes are liberally strewn and scattered by the sages with flowers, fresh green *dūrvā* grass and *akshatas* or holy rice in their *balikarma* or the offerings to the celestials after their bath. The banks are studded with sages seated in *brahmāsana*, lost in complete contemplation on the Supreme One and in the peculiar sleepless meditative concentration, with their legs bound by bands of *yogapaṭṭa*, standing sometimes on the toe of a single foot with their eye fixed on the orb of the sun, taking on to themselves the essence of the Eternal One, themselves being *Brahmaṛishis* of the highest order:

शुभ्रैरभ्रंकषैरूर्मिशतैः स्वर्गनिवासिनाम् ।
कथयन्तीमिवालोकावगाहाचमनादिकम् ॥
सुस्नातानां मुनीन्द्राणां बलिकर्मोचितैरलम् ।
बहिः पुष्पोत्करैः कीर्णतीरां दूर्वाक्षतान्वितैः ॥
ब्रह्मध्यानपरैर्योगपरब्रह्मासनस्थितैः ।
योगनिद्रागतैर्योगपट्टबन्धैरुपासिताम् ॥
पादाङ्गुष्ठाग्रभूमिस्थैः सूर्यसंबद्धदृष्टिभिः ।
ब्रह्मर्षिभिः परं ब्रह्म गृणद्भिरुपसेविताम् ॥

Kumārasambhava 10,44-47.

All this is on the picturesque site on the sandy slopes of the great river Gaṅgā that, never fatigued, eternally purifies the three worlds with its three streams:

त्रिभिः स्रोतोभिरश्रान्तं पुनाना भुवनत्रयम् ।

Kumārasambhava 10,31.

The love between the teacher and the taught was an ideal. Even in the study of the highest texts in the simplest atmosphere, under the trees in the forest, in the hermitage, the pupil clad in simple attire, facing the teacher and in his proximity, (*upanishad* seated so close) puts forth a prayer in the form of a *śānti-pāṭha* or a text of peace, which is his heartfelt desire to ever revere the master and the master ever to love him. May the Lord protect us both, the teacher

and the taught. May we be nourished, may we work effectively in close unison. May our study be of the highest glory and lustre. May hatred be eliminated from us and may we be most loving, the teacher and the taught. Thrice I repeat. May there be peace:

सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै । ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 2,1.

There is a sculpture from Bhārhut representing a venerable sage discoursing on the highest *parā vidyā* to his discples gathered around him, attentively listening to his teachings. Fortunately at Bhārhut almost every sculpture has a label in early Brāhmī script explaining its purport. Here the label says *dīrghatapasī sise anusāsati* meaning the *ṛishi* Dīrghatapas is discoursing to his disciples (Fig. 68).

This sculpture is to be understood in the context of the early picture in the *Upanishads* of the *āchārya* teaching his disciples. The word here used is also *anuśāsana* as in the *Taittirīyopanishad*, There is a speeial appraisal of the theme of *vidyā*,

अथाधिविद्यम् । आचार्यः पूर्वरूपम् । अन्तेवास्युत्तररूपम् ।
विद्या सन्धिः । प्रवचनं सन्धानम् । इत्यधिविद्यम् ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,3,3.

Again in the same *Upanishad* there is the picture of the teacher admonishing his students after the study is over, and here expressly the word used is *anuśāsti*, followed by *satyam vada, dharmam chara* etc. Even in the label at Bhārhut the expression is *anuśāsati*. This is the earliest example in sculpture answering the *Upanishadic* word-picture of the teacher surrounded by pupils. There is the *guru's uchchāraṇa* and the pupil's *anūchchāraṇa* or the repeating of the master's utterance by the disciples to memorize the text. In ancient India all *vidyā* was gained by the ear and was so named *śruta*. *Veda* itself was *śruti* and the Vedic text was carefully recited with proper intonation *sasvaro vedaḥ*. The *Veda* representing *parā-vidyā* was learnt to be repeated according to *svara*. This *adhyayana*, particularly the *āraṇyaka* portions, were in *tapovanas*, penance groves, in hermitages close to rivers as described by Manu:

अपां समीपे नियते नैत्यिकं विधिमास्थित: ।
सावित्रीमप्यधीयीत गत्वारण्यं समाहित: ॥

Manusmṛiti 2.104.

It has to be remembered in this context that the label for the Bhārhut panel *dīrghatapas* is very significant as it is a modification of the name of Dīrghatamas born of Mamatā by her husband the sage Utathya, elder brother of Bṛihaspati. When he was yet in the womb of his mother as a foetus he was of great Vedic knowledge and lustre. Aśvaghosha uses the term Dīrghatapas in comparing Kapila in his importance as a seer to this sage, though the correct name of the great sage known to the *Ṛigveda* is Dirghatamas

माहात्म्याद्दीर्घतपसो यो द्वितीय इवाभवत्

Sundarananda 1,4.

By a curse the child in the womb was born blind and was known as Dīrghatamas:

उतथ्यपत्नीममतासमुत्पन्नो...शप्तोन्धो दीर्घतमनामाभवत् ।

Vishṇupurāṇa 4,19,5.

It is also possible that the word *dīrghatapas* is after *dīrghasandhya* mentioned by Manu as responsible for the great longevity of the sages:

ऋषयो दीर्घसन्ध्यत्वाद्दीर्घमायुरवाप्नुयु: ।

Manusmṛiti

It is believed that the master affectionately imparted the most coveted and even the most valued secret learning to the beloved student:

ब्रूयु: स्निग्धस्य शिष्यस्य गुरवो गुह्यमप्युत ।

Śrimad Bhāgavata 1,1,8.

Rāma who learnt the most impossible potential weapons and their use from Viśvāmitra is a great example. Rāma is astonished that the little boys Kuśa and Lava could know the great *astras* that he alone had learnt from Viśvāmitra who after a long disciplehood learned from Kṛiśāśva. The order of learning also is Kṛiśāśva, the great sage from whom Kauśika learnt who taught Rāma and these had been vouchsafed along with the Jṛimbhaka missiles to the two boys:

कृशश्वः कौशिको राम इति येषां गुरुक्रमः ।
प्रादुर्भवन्ति तान्येव शस्त्राणि सह जृम्भकैः ॥

Uttararāmacharita 7,9.

The study by itself was not considered so effective except when combined with character. Every young *ṛishikumāra* pupil was instructed while studying to practice the highest ethical principles as a background for taking in, retaining and enhancing the glory of learning. Study itself was composed first of the pupil's utterance closely following the teacher's utterance and exposition. The reciting of the text to oneself, understanding its connotation and retaining it in an amazingly clear manner was to make it fit to be imparted in turn to a future generation of pupils. The requisite for this learning and imparting of the learning was the highest ethical code, adherence to truth, penance, control of senses or self-restraint, peaceful disposition, tend- of the three fires and their adoration, honour to the guests and fellow beings and finally preparing oneself to have worthy progeny after the *samāvartana*:

ऋतं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । सत्यं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
तपश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । दमश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
शमश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । अग्नयश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
अग्निहोत्रं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । अतिथयश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
मानुषं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । प्रजा च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
प्रजनश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । प्रजातिश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9.

The highest principles were therefore included in both the teacher and the taught as essential prerequisites of action. The teacher almost treated the pupil as his own son. Many of them were *Kulapatis*. In fact, in the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, Kaṇva is described as a *Kulapati*. A *Kulapati* could maintain a thousand pupils, feed, clothe, shelter and impart education to them in different branches of knowledge. If the teacher wanted riches, it was not in a selfish sense, but to be able to effectively take care of such a huge congregation of pupils. This was the aim and ideal. It was certainly not in an ignoble, lesser instinct of greed or selfishness. Most of the sages, when the pupil was leaving, would never accept even a token fee, as they had no desires. It was only when he was importuned by Kautsa

on completion of his study that sage Varatantu demanded the impossible fee of fourteen crores of gold. The great sage, reverently asked by the pupil to accept the teacher's fee, considered more than enough his devoted and unfailing service to him for ever so long as enough recompense, but importuned again and again, the preceptor roused to anger, heedless of the impossibility of it, asked him to fetch fourteen crores of gold to equal in number the fourteen branches of knowledge that he had taught him:

समाप्तविद्येन मया महर्षिविज्ञापितोऽभूदु रुदक्षिणायै ।
स मे चिरायास्खलितोपचारां तां भक्तिमेवागणयत्पुरस्तात् ॥
निर्बन्धसंजातरुषार्थकार्श्यमचिन्तयित्वा गुरुणाहमुक्तः ।
वित्तस्य विद्यापरिसंख्यया मे कोटीश्चतस्रो दश चाहरेति ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5,20-21.

The teacher's act was more a service to the community, propagation of learning to the utmost and only making life itself a full one worthy of living. The pupil like the affectionate master, was a devoted one reciprocating the love. Occasionally there could be a mistake of the pupil resented by the master as in the case of Yājñavalkya, the devoted pupil of Vaiśampāyana. In his inordinate love for his master he wanted to effectively carry out his instructions by performing a certain expiation on his behalf all by himself, as he felt that his co-disciples were not equal to the task. His master, without understanding him, got into a rage, imagining he was insulting so many of his other pupils and demanded the entire *Veda* he had taught him to be disgorged. Poor Yājñavalkya's remonstration assuring him of his utmost affection as the root cause of his suggestion having fallen on the deaf ears of his master, he disgorged the *Veda* which in turn was gathered up by the other disciples in the form of Tittiri birds at the master's behest, on account of which, it came to be known as *Taittirīya Kṛishṇa Yajurveda.*

As the Vedic injunction was that one should never desist from the utterance and exposition of the *Veda* by retaining it, Yājñavalkya had again to acquire this *Veda* by following the sun, speeding in his chariot, reciting it in turn *anūchchāraṇa* — what the sun uttered as his second master. The intonation of the *Veda* here, disturbed by the speed of his solar chariot, got slightly varied, and thus arose the

Śukla Yajurveda. A beautiful sculpture from Paṭṭaḍakal of the eighth century gives this incident as an effective visual representation. This is a unique sculpture of the early Chāḷukyan school (Fig. 69).

Yājñavalkya's greatness as the preceptor of the great royal sage philosopher Janaka himself is evident in the *Bṛihadāryaṇyaka Upanishad* where the philosophical exposition of the *ātmā* to Maitreyī, his beloved and learned wife, is as meaningful an exposition as any other exposition of his in the court of Janaka himself. Yājñavalkya's importance is brought out fully by Bhavabhūti. That the Raghus could be proud in having Janaka as *sambandhī* is described. Here is your worthy *sambandhī* born of the family of the Janakas for whom Yājñavalkya the great sage himself sang the hymns of Vedic glory:

एष वः श्लाध्यसम्बन्धी जनकाना कुलोद्भवः ।
याज्ञवल्क्यो मुनिर्यस्मै वेदपारायण जगौ ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,9.

in the words of Arundhati who tells Kausalyā of her good fortune in getting Janaka as her *sambandhi.*

There is another sculpture in the Mathura Museum (Fig. 70) where the master is shown standing with an umbrella in his hand and giving an exposition of *Vidyā* to his assembly of students, who humbly sit gazing at him to receive from him the knowledge that ultimately would lead them by its true understanding to the highest state of immortality—*amṛitatva.* It has been ever a prayer 'Lead me from darkness to light, from death lead me to immortality':

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय । विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ।

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 1,3,28.

and haviug mastered the learning one really reaches immortality.

The study was in all directions and in different fields. But the hightest learning was that which led to the realisation of the Supreme One enabling one to understood that the Almighty in the orb of the sun and in the individual self was one and the same which, realised, leads one to the highest bliss of immortality:

स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः । स य एवं विद् ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 2,8.

There are many examples of typical pupils and also their masters. The very pink of perfection of the qualities of a pupil who was mainly to be humble, devoted, respectful to elders and helpful to his master, is seen in Satyakāma Jābāla who studied under Gautama, and Upakosala Kamalāyana who had the privilege in turn to study under Satyakāma Jābāla himself, each for twelve years. The *Chāndogya Upanished* gives an interesting account of the patience with which Satyakāma maintained the fires and worked for his master, tending the cows and multiplying a few hundred into a thousand. Yet, after so many years, the teacher had still to test and had not taught him the highest, even when his duty towards this devoted pupil was pointed out by his own wife, who felt that his power of endurance had been tried overmuch. The cattle he tended felt so much for him that the bull, leader of the herd, called his attention to their increased number asking him now to return to his master and himself taught him a fourth part of the highest *vidyā*. The fires he tended taught him similarly a fourth. The swans in the sky did another quarter, followed by the diver-bird that completed the remaining part:

> अथ हैनं ऋषभोऽभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवइति ह प्रतिशुश्राव । प्राप्ताः, सौम्य, सहस्रं स्मः, प्रापय न आचार्यकुलम्, ब्रह्मणस्ते पादं ब्रवानीति । ब्रवीतु मे, भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच ।
>
> *Chāndogya Upanishad* 4,5,1-2

Gautama was pleased with him so lustrous with his newly acquired knowledge learnt from others than mortals, and graciouly complying with his requet to teach him, as *Vidyā* learnt from the teacher was the most efficacious, completed his education by his own teachings:

> तमग्निरभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः इति ह प्रतिशुश्राव । ब्रह्मणः, सौम्य, ते पादं ब्रवानीति । ब्रवीतु मे, भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच..... तं हंस उपनिपत्याभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः इति ह प्रतिशुश्राव । ब्रह्मणः, सौम्य, ते पादं ब्रवानीति ब्रवीतु मे भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच.....त मद्गुरुपनिपत्याभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः इति ह प्रतिशुश्राव । ब्रह्मणः, सौम्य, ते पादं ब्रवानीति । ब्रवीतु मे भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच..... प्राप हाचार्यकुलम् । तमाचार्योऽभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगव', इति ह प्रतिशुश्राव । ब्रह्मविदिव वै, सौम्य, भासि, को नु त्वानुशशासेति । अन्ये मनुष्येभ्य इति ह प्रजतिज्ञे ।

भगवांस्त्वेव मे कामे ब्रूयात्, श्रुतं ह्येव मे भगवद्दृशेभ्यः, आचार्याद्धैव विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठम् प्रापतीति । तस्मै हैतदेवोवाच अत्र ह न किंचन वीयाय इति, वीयायेति ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 4,5-9.

Upakosala Kāmalāyana similarly tended the cows and the threefold fires and devoutly served his master Satyakāma Jābāla. It is touching indeed to see how the three fires that he tended spoke to themselves with great feeling that his instruction was delayed and themselves taught him each a portion of the highest *vidyā* The fires however told Upakosala that the final touches in the teaching of his education should be given by his master which he would impart soon. The first thing the master remarked after his retnrn from a long journey was to call him endearingly and ask him how he acquired the lustre of knowledge on his face, and the pupil gave out all that happened when the master finally polished the lustre of the glowing supreme knowledge he had acquired by adding his final touches:

उपकोसलो ह वै कामलायनः सत्यकामे जाबाले ब्रह्मचर्यमुवास । तस्य ह द्वादश वर्षाण्यग्नीन् परिचचार । स ह स्मान्यानन्तेवासिनः समावर्तयंस्तं ह स्मैव न समावर्तयति । तं जायोवाच, तप्तो ब्रह्मचारी, कुशलमग्नीन्परिचचारीन्मा त्वाग्नयः परिप्रवोचन्, प्रब्रूह्यस्मा इति । तस्मै ह अप्रोच्यैव प्रवासांचक्रे.....अथ हाग्नयः समूदिरे, तप्तो ब्रह्मचारी, कुशलं नः पर्यचारीत् । हन्तास्मै प्रब्रवामेति । तस्मै होचुः, ।

अथ हैनं गार्हपत्योऽनुशशास..... .....अथ हैनमन्वाहार्यपचनोऽनुशशास .....अथ हैनमाहवनीयेऽनुशशास.....ते होचुः उपकोसल, एषा, सौम्य, तेऽस्मद्विद्यात्मविद्या च, आचार्यस्तु ते गतिं वक्तेति । आजगाम हास्याचार्यः । तमाचार्योऽभ्युवादोपकोसल इति । भगवः, इति ह प्रातिशुश्राव । ब्रह्मविदिव, सौम्य, ते मुखं भाति, को नु त्वानुशशासेति..... इदं, इति ह प्रतिजज्ञे । लोकान् वाव किल, सौम्य, तेऽवोचन्, अहं तु ते तद्वक्ष्यामि यथा पुष्करपलाश अपो न श्लिष्यन्ते, एवमेवंविदि पापं कर्म न श्लिष्यत इति । ब्रवीतु मे भगवानिति । तस्मै होवाच ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 4,10-14.

The other example is Āruṇeya Śvetaketu, who after his first spell of stay with the chosen master, returned to his father conceited and opiniated in the complacent feeling that he had mastered all branches of learning. His father, however, put him questions he could not answer and brought him to his senses, and himself at home taught him the highest truth, so that ultimately he became very

learned. His story as a conceited pupil is given in the *Chāndogya Upanishad.*

श्वेतकेतुर्हारुणेय आस । तं ह पितोवाच, श्वेतकेतो, वस ब्रह्मचर्यं, न वै, सौम्य, अस्मत्कुलीनोऽनूच्य ब्रह्मबन्धुरिव भवतीति । स ह द्वादशवर्ष उपेत्य चतुर्विंशतिवर्षः सर्वान् वेदानधीत्य महामना अनूचानमानी स्तब्ध एवाय । तं ह पितोवाच, श्वेतकेतो, यन्नु सौम्य, इदं महामना अनूचानमानी स्तब्धोऽसि उत तमादेशमप्राक्ष्यः । येनाश्रुतं श्रुतं भवति, अमतं मतं, अविज्ञातं विज्ञातमिति । कथं नु, भगवः, स आदेशो भवतीति.....भूय एव मा, भगवान्, विज्ञापयत्विति । तथा, सौम्य, इति होवाच ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 6, 1 and 11.

He was along with Yājñavalkya in the pupilage of Patañchala Kāpya and later in the court of Janaka as given in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad.* Though there was particularly a ban on providing pleasures and comforts to the body that would distract pupils from their studies, Śvetaketu insisted on eating honey though it was forbidden for a *Brahmachārī.* There are also instances of certain pupils who realised the shortcomings of their education.

Again, in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad,* we have the story of Śvetaketu Āruṇeya reporting to his father that what he had learned from him was not enough to answer the learned questions in philosophy put to him by the ruler Pravāhaṇa Jaivali. The father confesses he had taught him all that he knew and suggests that both of them, disregarding their higher position in society as Brāhmaṇas should immediately repair to the kidg to learn the highest knowledge as his pupils:

स होवाच, तथा नस्त्वं, तात, जानीथा, यथा यदहं किं च वेद सर्वमहं
तत्तुभ्यमवोचम्, प्रेहि तु तत्र प्रतीत्य, ब्रह्मचर्यं वत्स्याव इति ।

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 6,2,4.

The Devas and Asuras and even Indra, when they went for pupilage, went humble at heart, carrying fuel in their hand as a symbol of *Brahmacharya,* steadfast studentship, by tending the fire and attending on the master, discarding the pleasures of life, and entirely devoted to studies. This was the ideal:

समिधं, सौम्य, आहर, उप त्वा नेष्ये ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 4,4,5

तत उ ह वालाकिः समित्पाणिः प्रतिचक्राम उपायानीति ।

Kauśitaki Upanishad 4,19.

इन्द्रो हैव देवानां अभि प्रवव्राज, वैरोचनोऽसुराणां, तौ हा
संविदनावेव समित्पाणि प्रजापतिसकाशमाजग्मतुः ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 8,7,2.

In the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.1.2, 1-9, the prerequisite of a *Brahmachārī* is clearly given. He should be above ego, should disregard fame, sleep, anger, pride, personal beauty and fragrance. His wearing the antelope skin would give him lustre, i e. *Brahmavarchas* more than what ego could give him. His duty towards his master gives him the fame that makes him later in life a worthy master. Escape from sloth gives him agility. Overcoming anger, he becomes divine. Humble at heart, he develops the utmost purity of water. His vision turned away from feminine beauty brings him the greatest physical charm. Abstinence from the fragrance of flowers and fruit renders him fragrant. These great qualities in the *Brahmachārī* by a supreme effort at cultivation of character and intellect, one growing in close unison with the other, make him a worthy individul who, in turn, could inculcate in the next generation of young pupils the necessary learning, character, fortitude and everything conducive to making up the elements that build up a great nation that India has always been from the most hoary past.

Brahmacharya for *svādhāya* was not only for the younger folk who had to anyway master the *Veda*, but *svādhyāya* was considered so essential that it was in itself a *purushārtha* or the highest ideal in life. That is why we have the Vedic story of aged Bharadvāja who practised *brahmacharya* in three spans of human life and requested Indra for yet another, again to continue his studies of the *Veda*. Indra now pointed out to him that the *Vedas* are endless, like the three mountains in front of him, and what he had studied in three lives was only three handfuls from them, which necessitated the study of the essentials:

भरद्वाजो ह त्रिभिरायुर्भिर्ब्रह्मचर्यमुवास । तं ह जीर्णि स्थविरं शयानमिन्द्र उपव्रज्योवाच । भरद्वाज, यत्ते चतुर्थमायुर्दद्यां, किमनेन कुर्या इति । ब्रह्मचर्यमेवैनेन चरेयमिति होवाच । तं ह त्रीन् गिरिरूपानविज्ञातानिव दर्शयांचकार । तेषामेकैकस्मान्मुष्टिमाददे ।

स होवाच भरद्वाजेत्यामन्त्रय । वेदा वा एते, अनन्ता वै वेदाः, एतद्वा एतैस्त्रिभिरा-युर्भिरन्ववोचथाः ।

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3,10,11.

Even the great *devarishi* Nārada approaches the self-luminous in intelligence, the five-year old sage Sanatkumāra for furthering his vast Vedic knowledge by obtaining from him *Brahmavidyā*, the highest that overcomes all misery and leads to the path of bliss. But Sanatkumāra first enquires the extent of his knowledge so that he could instruct him further. Teach me, reverend Sir, addresses Nārada to Santkumāra; and the latter enquires, what is it you already know, so that I may instruct you beyond that;

अधीहि भगवः, इति होपससाद सनत्कुमारं नारदः, तं होवाच, यद्वेत्थ तेन मोपसीद, ततस्त ऊर्ध्वं वक्ष्यामीति, स होवाच ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 7.1,1.

Nārada replies by giving a whole list of the sacred lore studied by him. Reverend Sir, I know the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Atharvaveda*, the epics and *Purāṇas*, the *Veda* of the *Vedas*, knowledge of the Manes, mathematics, portents, statecraft, logic, ethics, celestial and sacred knowledge, exorcism, warfare, astronomy, serpent lore, celestial and human arts and crafts. These I know. But reverend Sir, I know only the texts and not the comprehension of the Supreme Self. I have heard from great ones like you that one who realises the Self crosses over sorrow. I pity myself in this state, revered Sir, please help me reach the other shore of sorrow. And came the reply, whatever you have studied is only just the terminology and nothing more:

ऋग्वेदं भगवः, अध्येमि, यजुर्वेदं, सामवेदं, अथर्वणं चतुर्थं, इतिहासपुराणं पञ्चमं, वेदानां वेदं, पित्र्यं, राशिं, दैवं, निधिं, वाकोवाक्यं, एकायनं, देवविद्यां, ब्रह्मविद्यां, भूतविद्यां, क्षत्रविद्यां, नक्षत्रविद्यां, सर्पदेवजनविद्यां, एतत्, भगवः, अध्येमि । मन्त्रविदेवास्मि नात्मविन् । श्रुतं ह्येव मे भगवद्दृशेभ्यः, तरति शोकमात्मविदिति । सोऽहं, भगवः, शोचामि, तं मा, भगवान्, शोकस्य पारं तारयत्विति । तं होवाच यद्वै किं चैतदध्यगीष्ठाः, नामैवैतत् ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 7,1,2-3.

The *svādhyāya* of the *Veda* entailed, as already seen, the study of the six *aṅgas*, all of which are important for proper elucidation of the *Veda* and these are also attributed to *ṛishis*. In fact Yāska is asso-

ciated with *Nirukta.* Pāṇini is very reverently referred to by Patañjali as a great *ṛishi* who by composing the terse grammatical aphorisms created the magnificant *Aṣhṭādhyāyī* to elaborate these *Śivasūtras* as they are known. It is said that Naṭarāja, after his dance, sounded his drum fourteen times giving the fourteen basic *sūtras.* Pāṇini's *Aṣhṭādhyāyī* is based on these fundamental fourteen *sūtras*:

नृत्तावसाने नटराजराजो ननाद ढक्कां नवपंचवारम् ।
उद्धर्तुकामः सनकादिसिद्धानेतद्विमर्शे शिवसूत्रजालम् ॥

The commentator on this great work is Patañjali. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita sings his glory thus. At the feet of that great god, the entire mass of literature, well known as ancient and new, in the form of the *Vedas* and the epics, *Purāṇas*, *Smṛitis* and so on, in their entirety, gathers around and rests at it, and leisurely listening to it as the reptile anklet of that Lord, Patañjali could completely analyse it, create and explain the great science of grammar; that Lord Śiva is the one and only celestial for my reckoning and I would not even utter the name of any other

प्राचीनेत्यधुनातनेति भुवने वाङ्नाम या यावती
तां सर्वां परितः परीत्य चरणे यस्यायतीविश्रमम् ।
शृण्वन्नङ्गदतां गतः फणिपतिः शब्दागमं व्याकरो-
त्स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 18.

Patañjali is the author of the great classic *Mahābhāshya* about which it is said that one should either rule a great empire or study the great *Mahābhāshya*:

महाभाष्यं वा पठनीयं महाराज्यं वा पालनीयम् ।

This same Patañjali held in the highest esteem the still earlier sage who was responsible for the *Aṣhṭādhyāyī* that contains the key to the understanding of grammar in his aphorisms on the subject. Probably the greatest intellectual feat achieved in the world of Sanskrit is this remarkable book which is indeed by a great seer sage. Patañjali gives a pen picture of how he wrote it. Bhagavān Pāṇini seated on *kuśa* grass facing east, in the holiest atomosphere, with *kuśapavitra* on his finger commenced writing his *vyākaraṇasūtras* with supreme effort:

प्रमाणभूत आचार्यो दर्भपवित्रपाणिः शुच्यवकाशे
प्राङ्मुख उपविश्य महता प्रयत्नेन सूत्राणि प्रणयति स्म ।

Mahābhāshya 1.

It is no wonder that about such a great sage, even Patañjali, insurpassed in his grandeur in the exposition of grammer, goes into ecstasy. In fact Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjati are all the three taken as *Maharishis*, and every day, according to the traditional study of *vyākaraṇa*, the first salutation is composed of the verses that offer obeisance to the three *ṛishis*. Salutation to Pāṇini who receiving *aksharasamāmnāya*, the classification of the alphabet, from Śiva himself, expounded the entire science of grammar:

येनाक्षरसमाम्नायमधिगम्य महेश्वरात् ।
कृत्स्नं व्याकरणं प्रोक्तं तस्मै पाणिनये नमः ॥

Salutation to Pāṇini by whom the speech of man was purified by immaculate waters of vocabulary, and darkness arising from ignorance dispelled:

येन धौता गिरः पुसां विमलैः शब्दवारिभिः ।
तमश्चाज्ञानजं भिन्नं तस्मै पाणिनये नमः ॥

I devotedly salute the seer triad, Vararuchi the elaborator, Patañjali the commentator and Pāṇini the codifier of grammatical rules:

वाक्यकारं वररुचिं भाष्यकारं पतञ्जलिम् ।
पाणिनिं सूत्रकारं च प्रणतोऽस्मि मुनित्रयम् ॥

This is the glory of grammar in the *sūtras*. How often does not Pāṇini refer to the usage in the *Vedas* and the common usage in classical Sanskrit, the then well-understood subtle differences in all the *svaras*, intonation and pronunciation! He has mentioned scores of grammarians that have preceded him. The antiquity of the language, its development and growth has been in itself an amazing study.

Again Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita shows how even the science of music emanating from the *gāna* or the singing of the *Sāmas* is already known in the *Veda* in such hymns as describe thier melodious note:

एतत्साम गायन्नास्ते ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 3,10,5.

The great authors associated with the standard works on music and dance who showed the way to understanding music itself for the mortals are the earrings of Śiva, the serpents Kambala and Aśvatara. His anklet, another snake, is Patañjali, the author of the great *Mahābhashya* on grammar. The means of the mortal world to learn to distinguish all that is ethical from the unethical, the *Veda*, is only the neighing of the horses as they were transformed to be yoked to the earth chariot of Śiva in his form as Tripurāntaka. That Lord is my celestial, I would not even utter the name of any other:

गान्धर्वागमदेशिकौ तनुभृतां यत्कर्णयोः कुण्डले
यत्पादाङ्गदनिर्मितं पदमहाभाष्यं धुरि स्त्यायति ।
पुण्यं पापमिति व्यवस्थितिरियं यद्वाहहेषाकृता
स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 19.

These are also sages, Nāgas rendered into sages, that perform penance on the limbs of Śiva that they decorate. The great sage Patañjali (Fig. 71) with another Vyāghrapāda (Fig. 72) the tiger-footed, whom the lord lovingly provided with tiger legs to easily climb thorny Bilva trees to gather tender shoots for his worship, have their names hallowed at Chidambaram where they eternally watch Śiva's dance of bliss. Bhṛingi (Fig. 73) so ematiatied by penance as to be provided an additional leg by Śiva is a third to these two closely associated with Naṭarāja.

Music and dance were not considered outside the pale of holy learning. Even *Kāma* or love, the entire science of eroticism was written by a *ṛishi* Vātsyāyana. Nārada (Fig, 22) and Tumburu are the two great divine musicians well-versed in the play of the *vīṇā* the noblest musical instrument, वीणा हि नामासमुद्रोत्थितं रत्नम् as given in *Mrichchhakaṭika*. In the description of Samudragupta in his Allāhābād inscription he is supposed to have put to shame even the divine ministrels Tumburu and Nārada:

निशितविदग्धमतिगान्धर्वललितैर्व्रीडितत्रिदशपतिगुरुतुम्बुरुनारदादेः

Corp. Inscr. Ind. 3,8.

Kālidāsa himself draws attention to the proficiency of Nārada on the

vīṇā with which he was proceeding towards Gokarṇa on the South-Western sea to offer musical worship to Śiva:

अथ रोधसि दक्षिणोदधेः श्रितगोकर्णनिकेतमीश्वरम् ।
उपवीणयितुं ययौ रवेरुदगावृत्तिपथेन नारदः ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 8,33.

Nārada is one of the divine *ṛishis*, a *Devaṛishi*. Five *Devaṛishis* are well known. The first is Nārada, the other is Tumburu who is also proficient on the *vīṇā*, and probably associated with another variety of musical instrument from which the present Tamburā as it is called is derived. He is horse-faced. Parvata is another divine sage and Devala yet another. Bharata, the famous author of *Nāṭyśāstra*, is another of this celestial group of sages.

The glory of *Nātyaśāstra* lies in the fact that when Brahmā created it by taking *pāṭhya* or the text from the *Ṛigveda*, *gāna* or music from the *Sāmaveda*, *proyoga* or use from *Yajurveda* and *bhāva* or flavour from the *Atharvaveda*, he created a new science of dance which could best be elaborated and illustrated in its nuances by the Apsarasas. Like Nārāyaṇa who made Viśvakarmā spread the knowledge of *chitra* as given in the *Chitrasūtra*, Brahmā gave this task of exposition of *Nātya* to Bharata, the great sage who spread its knowledge in the world. There are two beautiful sculptures at Mahābalipuram to illustrate Śiva himself lovingly teaching the naunces of dance. With the right palm on his mouth in great reverence and somewhat bent in humility, Bharata listens to Śiva as he gives him lessons on *nāṭya*, of which as Naṭarāja he is the lord of teachers (Fig. 74). Nāṭya Dakshiṇāmūrti Śiva is very fond of dance. Vigorous dance, *tāṇḍava*, the opposite of soft dance, *lāsya*, Śiva taught to Taṇḍu; and the sage Taṇḍu did it so well that this mode of dance itself with its powerful strides which are shown being practised by Taṇḍu in the presence of Śiva himself with his foot lifted to be brought down with a thud, assumed the name *tāṇḍava* (Fig. 75). These sculptures on the Dharmarājaratha of the time of Pallava Narasiṁhavarman I of the middle of the seventh century are very important for illustrating the enthusiasm of not only the highest celestial, Śiva, in teaching these modes of dance but even that of the great *ṛishis* who learnt them with a zest. Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* is a classical work and it is achieved

by a *ṛishi,* Music and dance as given in the *Chitrasūtra* have a greater appeal as an offering to the deity than even worship in other forms. They are *mokshasādhanas* achieved:

कलानां प्रवरं चित्रं धर्मकामार्थमोक्षदम् ।

Chitra also shares *moksha* in the same way as *nāṭya* and *saṅgīta* when the dancer and the musician could have the highest bliss by invoking the Almighty by his offer of rhythm and melody:

गीतज्ञो यदि गीतेन नाप्नोति परमं पदम् ।
देवस्यानुचरो भूत्वा तेनैव सह मोदते ॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3,18,7.

Similarly *nāṭya* is also a means of salvation. It is higher than even the offering of flowers, fruit and other offerings:

पुष्पनैवेद्यदानेभ्यो नृत्तदानं विशिष्यते ।
देवताराधनं कुर्याद्यस्तु धर्मेण नृत्तवित् ॥
स सर्वकामानाप्नोति मोक्षोपायं च विन्दति ॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3,34,35-39.

That is why in the *Śivānandalaharī* Śankara pours forth his heart in his offering of a song as a posy of literary flowers obtained through the grace of the Mother of the Universe and again in turn offered to her:

त्वदीयाभिर्वाग्भिस्तव जननि वाचां नुतिरियम् ॥

Saundaryalaharī

Bharata, the exponent of dance is wonderfully described in the *Uttararāmacharita* as always in touch with the Apsarasas whom he could well invite to perform any new creation of a drama like the one prepared by Vālmīki. As a sage he is very simple and lives in a hermitage like any of the others whose mind is only diverted towards the Almighty in the form of *satya* or *tapas.* Bharata's hermitage is not very far from Vālmīki's, and in fact Vālmīki who had created a new drama unknown yet to the world and to be first made available in a performance by the Apsarasas at the sacrifice of the *aśvamedha* of Rāma, is referred to by Lava, when he tells Janaka, Arundhatī and Kausalyā that his elder brother Kuśa had accompanied the *brahmachārī* disciples of Vālmīki who had sent the manuscript of the drama

he had composed giving the later story of Sītā after her abandonment by Lakshmaṇa near his hermitage, the birth of the twins and the rest, of which no one had any idea and which was for the first time to be witnessed enacted by celestial nymphs.

Lava : This further portion of the story has not been heard by us or any other.

Janaka: Has not the poet composed it?

Lava : He has composed it but it has not been staged. A portion of it with an episode in it deep in its emotional grace made fit for enactment was written in his own hand by the reverend sage and sent to the revered seer Bharata, the author of the science of dance and music.

Janaka: Why?

Lava : Because the revered Bharata would get it enacted through the celestial nymphs.

Janaka: This is indeed striking wonder in us.

Lava : The enthusiasm of the revered Vālmīki is very great in this. Therefore he has sent it personally through his own disciples who have personally carried it carefully in their hand to reach the hermitage of Bharata and give it to him. As a guard for protecting them and to avoid any interruption my revered brother bow in hand has been sent.

लवः— नायं कथाप्रविभागोऽस्माभिरन्येन वा श्रुतपूर्वः ।

जनकः— किं न प्रणीत एव कविना ?

लवः— प्रणीतो न प्रकाशितः । तस्यैव कोऽप्येकदेशः सन्दर्भान्तरेण रसवानभिनयार्थः कृतः । तं च स्वहस्तलिखितं मुनिर्भगवान् व्यसृजद्भगवतो भरतस्य मुनेस्तौर्यत्रिकसूत्रकारस्य ।

जनकः— किमर्थम् ?

लवः— स किल भगवान् भरतस्तमप्सरोभिः प्रयोजयिष्यतीति ।

जनकः— सर्वमिदमाकूतकरमस्माकम् ।

लवः— महती पुनस्तस्मिन्भगवतो वाल्मीकेरास्था । यतः केषां चिदन्तेवासिनां हस्तेन तत्पुस्तकं भरताश्रमं प्रति प्रेषितम् । तेषामनुयात्रिकश्चापपाणिः प्रमादापनोदार्थमस्मद्भ्रातृ प्रेषितः । *Uttararāmacharita* 4.

From this it is clear that Bharata is equally a great *mumukshu muni* or one striving for liberation as a sage but in a different way.

Vātsyāyana, the author of *Kāmasūtra*, is not just any one but a great *ṛishi* of the Vatsa family, the family of the Bhṛigus. We should recall here that Bhagavān has in the *Gītā* clearly given that he is himself *Kāma* but unopposed to *dharma*:

धर्मविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ।

Bhagavadgītā 7,11.

So also, for *jyotisha* as well, it is *ṛishis* who have been at the root of understanding the greatest astronomical factors which are so important in the proper comprehension of the text of the *Veda* itself. When we remember that Balgangadhar Tilak could establish the date of the *Veda* by his knowledge of astronomy, it becomes very clear how prodigious knowledge of astronomy is essential for the appropriate understanding of the *Veda*, and *Jyotisha* is one of the *shaḍaṅgas*. It is *ṛishis* who are authors of every one of the *aṅgas*. Thus *svādhyāya* does not merely apply to the study of the intonation of the *Veda* and understanding the connotion of the text only but aided fully by other studies. Nārada when he enumerates all that he has studied to Sanatkumara, mentions so many *vidyās* and it is a wide range that is covered.

But the most laconic and mystifying lesson of monosyllables heard in the peals of thunder and understood differently by three different categories of listeners as the Almighty's teaching through the voice of nature are *dāna, dama* and *dāyā* that are essential particularly for the *devas, manushyas* and *asuras* as given in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*:

तदेतदेवैष दैवी वागनुवदति स्तनयित्नुर्द द द इति दम्यत, दत्त, दयध्वमिति ।

Bṛihadāraṇyakaupanishad 5,2,3.

emphasising for the gods particularly to turn their mind from enjoyment to restraint, the minds of the men from thought of the self to selflessness and sacrifice, and the *asuras* whose natural propensity is cruelty to kindness. These were factors that determined even the study of the secular sciences and arts. The fine arts themselves were

rendered pure, unsullied, heavenly and holy as an offering to god and learnt in that spirit. Dance, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, everything was in this spirit so that in this was a wide range of scholarship characterised as heavenly and sweet and as the very essence leading to the Almighty.

Among the *purushārthas*, It is not only *kāma* for which sage Vātsyāyana had prepared a masterly work, the *Kāmasūtra*, but *artha* has also the highest significance. Vasishṭha himself asks Rāma to accumulte wealth as a means of helping any right cause and for promoting *dharma*.

धनमार्जय काकुत्स्थ धनमूलमिदं जगत्

Bṛihaspati is reputed as the author of the highest book on *Arthaśāstra*. There have been several others, all of them sages, prominent among them Bṛihaspati (Fig. 76) who had written on this subject, and the great authoritative work of the fourth country B.C. during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya is by another sage a *nūtana* or a comparatively new one, Kauṭilya, who wrote that most masterly treatise, the best, known as *Arthaśāstra* whieh is the source book for understanding of ancient Indian culture. He quotes so many authors as beacons of light that preceded him in this subject. The saintly and simple life of Chāṇaka, who could in the most easy manner bring about the downfall of the Nandas, put Chandragupta on the throne and make him an emperor and could get Rākshasa, so devoted to the memory of the Nandas, ultimately to be the minister of Chandragupta himself, anxious to be away from the crowded atmosphere of the city in a *tapovana*, is very clear tn the remark of the Chamberlain in the *Mudrārākshasa*. Rightly the Chamberlain remarks, Oh ! wonderful indeed is the glorious prosperity of the prime minister of the king of the kings, the emperor:

अहो महाराजाधिराजस्य प्रथमामात्यस्य विभूतिः ।

Mudrārākshasa 3.

He describes his dwelling in all its grandeur again with its surroundings. There are simple-clad *brahmachārī* boys that learn the *Veda* from him and the cottage itself with its thatched roof half bent down and with a creeper of gourd crawling upon it, with stones here and

there lying for crushing cowdung cakes for the daily *homa* sacrifice, is indeed the true life of the simplest *Brahmavādin* that this seer really was. Personally his life was pure and simple, where wealth or glamour had no place:

उपलशकलमेतद्भेदकं गोमयानां विनमितपटलान्तं दृश्यते जीर्णकुड्यम् ।
Mudrārākshasa 3,15.

This is the great author of the *Arthaśāstra.*

For *Dharmaśāstra,* so many sages have contributed and very freely. We cannot feel sufficiently grateful to Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. P.V. Kane for having written the magnificent volumes of *Dharmaśāstra* literature which is vast and ocean-like. It is *ṛishis* like Manu, Yājñavalkya, Vasishṭha, Parāśara, Śaṅkhalikhita, Nārada and others who have written so much on *dharmaśāstra* in the form of *Smṛitis.* Purely domestic *saṁskāras* and their ritual has also been elaborated in the *Gṛihyasūtras* like those of *ṛishis* again like Āpastamba, Bodhāyana and others.

The *ṛishi* was the source of the text of the *dharmaśāstra* and also of the correct interpretation. He was best fitted from time to time to give such advice even to the greatest and the most righteous rulers that India ever had. The *ṛishis* dedicated themselves purely to the path of virtue and anything crossing that they resented, expected nothing from anyone but were happy to give away all that they had, and were fearless enough to pronounce their judgement on the acts of even the celestials themselves. Sometimes in a rage, like Durvāsa, they could curse even the celestials, or irritated, pronounce a curse though they would immediately with their heart soft as butter almost recall their curse.

The classical instance of *dharma* being taught to the very enforcer of *dharma,* Dharmarāja or Yama, is given in the episode of Aṇī Māṇḍavya, a great sage in meditation in his hermitage, who was impaled by a grave error of judgement. When the king discovered it he went and fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven which was readily done. And now Aṇī Māṇḍavya went to the abode of Yama Dharmarāja who was the repository of all knowledge of

dharma to mete out reward or punishment for meritorious or sinning souls, and enquired of him how he had caused him to be impaled when he was innocent. The Lord of Death replied by mentioning how when he was a child he had thrust thorns in the tails of bumble-bees and, as merit had its reward a thousandfold, even evil had its effect multifold which was the reason for his suffering. Aṇī Māṇḍavya immediately retorted that he did not know the simple fact that an innocent child doing anything unknowingly could gather no effect of sin as it should have been guided by elders. The undeserved punishment meted out to him was unjust. Hence he cursed Yama to be born in a lowly womb on earth as a mortal. That is the birth of Vidura from a maid servant of the palace of Vichitravīrya, though as Dharmarāja himself born, he possessed immense knowledge of *dharma* and no one could expound the ethical principles as Vidura. *Viduranīti* is itself the quintesscence of *dharma.*

It is again *ṛishis* that have shown the path of *bhakti.* Nārada's *Bhaktisūtras* are very well known and Śāṇḍilya was also a great *ṛishi* that showed the path of devotion like Śuka whose ambrosial exposition is the greatest devotional book *Śrīmad Bhāgavata.* For *moksha* the pathway is in the *parā vidyā* of the *Upanishads* for which Śankara has contributed not a little through his *bhāṣhyas,* most valuable commentaries. The study has been so great and popular that as recently as in the seventeenth century, the finest twin commentaries on both the *Brahmasūtras* and *Yogasūtras* have been written in the sweetest language and the simplest by one of the greatest ascetics that had realised the Absolute and was an *avadhūta,* Sadāśiva Brahmendra. The tradition of *ṛishis* is thus all embracing in its cultural and spiritual value.

किं नु तद्दूष्कृतं कर्म मया कृतमजानता ।
यस्येयं फलनिर्वृत्तिरीदृश्यासादिता मया ॥
पतङ्गिकानां पुच्छेषु त्वयेषीका प्रवेशिता ।
कर्मणस्तस्य ते प्राप्तं फलमेतत्तपोधन ॥
स्वल्पमेव यथा दत्तं दानं बहुगुणं भवेत् ।
अधर्म एवं विप्रर्षे बहुदुःखफलप्रदः ॥
कस्मिन्काले मया तत्तु कृतं ब्रूहि यथातथम् ।
तेनोक्तो धर्मराजेन बालभावे त्वया कृतम् ॥

वालो हि द्वादशाद्वर्षाज्जन्मतो यत्करिष्यति ।
न भविष्यत्यधर्मोत्र न प्रज्ञास्यन्ति वै दिशः ॥
अल्पेऽपराधेऽपि महान्मम दण्डस्त्वया कृतः ।
गरीयान् ब्राह्मणवधः सर्वभूतवधादपि ॥
शूद्रयोनावतो धर्म मानुषः सम्भविष्यसि ।
मर्यादां स्थापयाम्यद्य लोके धर्मफलोदयम् ॥
आ चतुर्दशकाद्वर्षान्न भविष्यति पातकम् ।
परतः कुर्वतामेवं दोष एव भविष्यति ॥
एतेन त्वपराधेन शापात्तस्य महात्मनः ।
धर्मो विदुररूपेण शुद्रयोनावजायत ॥
धर्मे चार्थे च कुशलो लोभक्रोधविवर्जितः ।
दीर्घदर्शी शमपरः कुरूणां च हिते रतः ॥

Mahābhārata 1,107,9-19.

The idea underlying the gleaning of wisdom from the various branches of knowledge has been of such great importance in the mind, that the annual *upākarma* which is, at it were, the Indian convocation and the inauguration of studies, shows every one in the village or town gathered *en masse* every year, starting with a determination to study; and on that day, after the *māhsaṅkalpa*, or the great determination of a life of study there is a little of every science, at least the first few lines, including the *Vedas* and *Vadāṅgas* repeated in token of having begun all the the studies, with an idea of continuing and studying further and further throughout the year. This impressive ceremony, itself an annual function even today, has been so very much in the mind of the Indian even in distant lands, where he had gone to stay, that he could still think in these terms. We can observe in the panels adorning the Barabudur *stūpa*, a sculpture depicting the beginning of the studies of a Bodhisattva from an *Avadāna* story, the youth seated amidst a row of students assembled, with their hands in the attitude of *saṅkalpa* or determination to study in the presence of a teacher who is shown on a slightly elevated seat (Fig. 77).

In the village itself, the temple as may be gathered from inscriptions, was a great centre of learning and in several inscriptions we learn how provision was made for the feeding and maintaining of teachers and students. The various subjects taught are also specifically mentioned as for instance, the study

of *Pūrvamīmāmsā* styled as *Prābhākaram* in the inscriptions, for which we learn provision was made in the temple of Nāgeśvarasvāmi at Kumbakoṇam, at Tiruvottiyur, at Eṇṇāyiram and several other places. The inscriptions from Tiruvottiyur and Tirumukkūḍal give a glowing account of an educational institution maintained by the temple. In the latter, we have also an elaborate description of a hospital attached to the temple and in the former we have the number of students, the subjects taught and other details. Along with the temples and *agrahāras* and *ghaṭikās* there must be reckoned for the dissemination of knowledge the *maṭhas* which grew in power and popularity under the Choḷa and Pāṇḍya kings and were important as centres of educational activity through the endowments made for the purpose by the arrangement for the reading and expounding of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. An inscription from Tiruttāṅgal in Ramanāthapuram district mentions *Mahābhārata-vṛitti* registering a gift of land for the expounding, of the *Mahābhārata* for public benefit. The *Anuśāsanaparva* and *Śāntiparva*, portions of the *Udyogaparva* and *Vanaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* and selections from the *purāṇas* like the *Vishṇupurāṇa*, *Harivaṁśa* or *Vāyupuraṇa* and portions from the *Rāmāyana* meant so much of ethical knowledge imparted through the ear, that the name *śruta* for learning was rendered appropriate. It is not merely literacy that meant anything in India; it is knowledge and knowledge of *dharma* and an ethical mode of living which was in itself a part of penance. It led the *gṛihastha* on from *brahmacharya* to *vānaprastha*, where *ṛishis* mainly revelled, finally leading on, if necessary, to *sanyāsa*, which was not vouchsafed for all, unless there was that absolute and complete renunciation of every human aspect and delight only in the Supreme Being.

The *ṛishis* are the very embodiment of simplicity. Generally marriages and intellectual discussions are among the equally matched:

विवाहश्च विवादश्च समयोरेव रोचते

Kaṇva as a sage had no treasures except the treasure of penance of which he had abundance. In fact, a sage in spite of his glory, lustre, and importance by his self control *(indriyanigraha)*, and truth *(satya)* was averse to worldly pleasures. He neither ploughed nor reaped, only gleaned and gathered such grain as fell by themselves as they grew and

ripened and got scattered here and there on the sandy banks of the river near the hermitage. Even out of it, truthfully and conscientiously, whether the state wanted it or not, the *ṛishis* delivered one sixth of their coarse grain as their part of the tribute and tax due to the king:

तान्युञ्छपष्ठाङ्कितसैकतानि शिवानि वस्तीर्थजलानि कच्चित् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5,8.

When sending Śakuntalā to her royal home in Dushyanta's palace, to be reached there by his disciples, Śāradvata and Śārṅgarava, sage Kaṇva sends his message through them. He calls Śārṅgarava to give the king this message of his regarding Śakuntalā. Consider us well with honour whose only wealth is penance and also your own eminent lineage that commands wealth and position as a king and the overflowing affection of this girl to you not brought about by kinsmen. You have to treat her with due consideration equal to the rest of your consorts. The rest depends on destiny. Indeed the kinsmen of the wife cannot say further more in this:

शार्ङ्गरव ! इति त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा शकुन्तलां पुरस्कृत्य वक्तव्यः
अस्मान् साधु विचिन्त्य संयमधनानुच्चैः कुलं चात्मनः
त्वय्यस्याः कथमप्यबान्धवकृतं स्नेहप्रवृत्तिं च तम् ।
सामान्यप्रतिपत्तिपूर्वकमियं दारेषु दृश्या त्वया
भाग्यायत्तमतः परं न खलु तद्वाच्यं वधूबन्धुभिः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,17.

Bhartṛihari has put it in an even more telling manner in comparing a *ṛishi* and a ruler. We are satisfied here with the simplest bark garments and you through the softest silken robes. Satisfaction for both of us is the same, and there is no difference in it at all. It is he whose desires are expansive that becomes indigent. When the mind is satisfied who is the opulent and who the begger:

वयमिह परितुष्टा वल्कलैस्त्वं दुकूलैः
सम इह परितोषो निर्विशेषो विशेषः ।
स तु भवति दरिद्रो यस्य तृष्णा विशाला
मनसि च परितुष्टे कोऽर्थवान् को दरिद्रः ॥

Vairāgyaśataka 49.

Lakshmī is as it were prayed to by the sage to leave him alone.

friend Drona, with an expression of supreme joy, his own queen Rukmiṇī attending on them both with reverence. Kṛishṇa washed his feet, welcomed him, with a seat and when he was comfortably settled, enquired of his welfare. What could the sage utter except that he was getting on well. He felt so ashamed that he could not even offer the parched rice. Kṛshṇa himself jokingly asked for what he had brought him and, as he felt so shy, he pulled it out and lovingly from that tatter he ate a handful and repeated it. So pleased was he that as the Supreme One he knew his requirements and though untold he mentally wished and showered on him his benevolence. Sudāma, unaccustomed to begging and always accustomed to contentment and starvation, delighting only in penance, returned without a word, with the supreme joy of having seen his friend and, when he reached his hermitage, lo and behold! where was it ! A mansion stood in it stead. Rightly can Venkaṭanātha, the great poet of the fourteenth century, say in his characteristic manner that he would not stoop to utter flattering praise of rulers who thought so high of their statecraft with an overweaning pride in their capacity to rule a kingdom that was just a small speck in a corner of a continent, part of the expanse of the earth, itself a dot in the universe; if necessary he would certainly beg of that great Celestial who in his great mercy vouchsafed the prosperity of the lord of riches itself to the sage Kuchela of ragged garment for his having offered him a handful of parched rice:

क्षोणीकोणशतांशपालनकलादुर्वारगर्वानिल-
क्षुभ्यत्क्षुद्रनरेन्द्रचाटुरचनां धन्यां न मन्यामहे ।
देवं सेवितुमेव निश्चिनुमहे योऽसौ दयालुः पुरा
धानामुष्टिमुचे कुचेलमुनये दत्ते स्म वित्तेशताम् ॥

Vairāgyapañchaka

In this context it is interesting to see a very telling picture from Trichur painted by a late Kerala painter in the eighteenth century which shows Kṛishṇa lovingly receiving Kuchela and conversing with him after making him feel comfortable on a couch in his palace (Fig. 79)

What is pleasure and enjoyment to the worldly is a thorn to be avoided for sages who love only the company of the innocent and live a life of abstinence. The court hall of Dushyanta is almost allergic

to both the disciples of Kaṇva, the hermit boys accustomed to simple life in a hermitage with no sophisticated crowd. It is like a house on fire in contrast as Śārṅgarava expresses:

तथापीदं शश्वत्परिचितविविक्तेन मनसा
जनाकीर्णं मन्ये हुतवहपरीतं गृहमिव ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 5,10.

Śāradvata not only readily falls in with his opinion but is stronger in his aversion not only to city life but also to the attitude of those imagining they are so happy in their enjoyment of pleasures, and views them as oilsmeared in the eyes of one fresh after a bath, the dirty ones viewed by the clean, the drowsy as seen by the wakeful, the fettered by the free-moving one:

स्थाने खलु भवान् पुरप्रवेशादित्थं भूतः ।
अहमप्यभ्यक्तमिव स्नातः शुचिरशुचिमिव प्रबुद्ध इव सुप्तम् ।
बद्धमिव स्वैरगतिर्जनमिह सुखसङ्गिनमवैमि ॥

Abhijñānaśakuntalam 5,11.

Even an idea of some of the most common animals in the town is absent in many of the hermit boys in the forest who had never an occasion to see them. Such is their simplicity. In the *Uttararāmacharita* it certainly provokes a smile to see that the horse creates a wonder in the minds of the hermit boys, the companions of Kuśa and Lava. As Lava is conversing with Janaka, bewildered *brahmachārī* boys rush on the scene and exclaim to their friend. Friend! we have heard the mention of an animal known as a horse in the countryside, but we have seen the beast with our own eyes only just now. Lava smiles and replies, though he had also never seen a horse before, that it is mentioned in treatises on animals and on warfare, and now asks them to describe how it looks. The boys enthusiastically picture it as having a long tail that it constantly waves, has a long neck and four hoofs, grazes on grass and sheds balls of dung of the size of a mango. Why a lengthy description? He is moving about great distances. Come along, we will go and see it:

संभ्रान्तवटवः—कुमार ! कुमार ! अश्वोऽश्व इति कोऽपि भूतविशेषो
जनपदेष्वनुश्रूयते । सोऽयमधुनास्माभिः प्रत्यक्षीकृतः ।
लवः—अश्व इति पशुसमाम्नाये सांग्रामिके च पठ्यते ।
तद्ब्रूत कीदृशः ।

वटवः—श्रूयतां

पश्चात्पुच्छं वहति विपुलं तच्च धूनोत्यजस्रं
दीर्घग्रीवः स भवति खुरास्तस्य चत्वार एव ।
शष्पाण्यत्ति प्रकिरति शकृत्पिण्डकानाश्रमात्रान्
किं वाऽऽख्यातैर्व्रजति स पुनर्दूरमेह्येहि यामः ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,26.

We can in this context understand that most hermit children probably had not even seen a cow because this was also a rare animal except in some fortunate hermitages like that of Vaśishṭha or Jamadagni. We know of the story of Upamanyu, son of Vyāghrapāda, whose mother, unable to give the child milk, deplores how they could have a cow to supply milk in the poor hermitages of sages! Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita describes the magnanimity of Śiva to Upamanyu. That great God is my deity, no other shall I even mention by name, the God who gave to a little known hapless Brāhmaṇa child that was just requesting a little milk to drink, which he could not get, and to whom Śiva, the very embodiment of the essence of compassion, gave an entire ocean of milk, fortune galore, the Kalpavṛiksha itself that yields all desires, ambrosia and the great Chintāmaṇi gem which is a panacea for all ills:

कस्मै चिद्विजबन्धवे कियदपि क्षीरं पुरा याचते
दत्तो येन दयारसैकवपुषा दुग्धोद एवार्णवः ।
श्रीश्रीवल्लभकल्पपादपसुधाचिन्तामणीभिः समं
स स्वामी मम दैवपं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 10.

The story is elaborately given in the *Mahābhārata.* Vyāghrapāda, the great devotee of Śiva Naṭarāja, was all the time engaged in adoring the Lord with Bilva leaves carefully gathered by him and had no time to attend to domestic requirements. The child had earlier once or twice partaken of milk and knew what it was. Both he and his younger brother Dhaumya were playing, saw a cow being milked somewhere in a hermitage, and having tasted of it, liked it immensely. Being a little boy he ran to his mother and asked her for food mixed in milk. The mother mixed some rice powder in water and gave it for the child. The boy in juvenile spirit told his mother that it was not

at all milk. This immediately made the mother so sad, and because of her attachment to the child, embraced him, smelt his curls of hair and tried to explain gently to him, how for them, sages engaged in penance, living in the forest and subsisting on roots and fruits, there could not be available milkfood, beyond their reach, and that Śiva was their only refuge. The child immediately innocently enquired who Śiva Mahādeva was, how he looked and how he could bestow his grace. Learning from her how he could contemplate on him, he so meditated, that Śiva, pleased, appeared and addressed him 'Child Upamanyu! I am so pleased with you, look at me. You are a sage already and you are a great devotee and I have understood you as a *Brahmaṛishi* in the making. You will have eternal youth and lustre. An ocean of milk will be there for you wherever you want it. You can enjoy this with all your friends and relatives for years and finally you will have bliss by attaining me:

व्याघ्रपाद इति ख्यातो वेदवेदाङ्गपारगः ।
तस्याहमभवं पुत्रो धौम्यश्चापि ममानुजः ॥
कस्य चित्वथ कालस्य धौम्येन सह माधव ।
अगच्छमाश्रमं क्रीडन्मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम् ॥
तत्रापि च मया दृष्टा दुह्यमाना पयस्विनी ।
लक्षितं च मया क्षीरं स्वदुतोप्यमृतोपमम् ॥
ततोऽहमब्रुंव वाल्याज्जननीमित्य नस्तथा ।
क्षीरोदनसमायुक्तं भोजनं हि प्रयच्छ मे ॥
अभावाच्चैव दुग्धस्य दुःखिता जननी तदा ।
ततः पिष्टं समालोड्य तोयेन सह माधव ॥
आवयोः क्षीरमित्येव पानार्थं समुपानयत् ।.....
ततोंऽहमब्रुवं वाल्याज्जननीमात्मनस्तदा ।
नेदं क्षीरोदनं मातर्यत्त्वं मे दत्तवत्यसि ॥
ततो मामब्रवीन्माता दुःखशोकसमन्विता ।
पुत्रस्नेहात्परिष्वज्य मूर्ध्नि चाघ्राय माधव ॥
कुतः क्षीरोदनं वत्स मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम् ।
वने निवसतां नित्यं कन्दमूलफलाशिनाम् ॥
तपसा जपनित्यानां शिवो नः परमा गतिः ।
कोऽयमम्ब महादेवः स कथं च प्रसीदति ॥.....
वत्सोपमन्यो तुष्टोऽस्मि पश्य मां मुनिपुङ्गव ।
दृढभक्तोऽसि विप्रर्षे मया जिज्ञासितो ह्यसि ॥.....

अक्षयं यौवनं तेऽस्तु तेजश्चैवानलोपमम ।
क्षीरोदः सागरश्चैव यत्र यत्रेच्छसि प्रियम् ॥
तत्र ते भविता कामं सान्निध्यं पयसो निधेः ।
क्षीरोदनं च भुक्ष्व त्वमभृतेन समन्वितम् ॥
बन्धुभिः सहितः कल्पं ततो मामुपयास्यसि ।

Mahābhārata 13,14,112-117, 120-123,126,130,339,358-360.

From this it clear that the simplicity of the hermit went to that extent that there were many boys who had not even seen a cow. It is no wonder that Droṇa who was so poor approached his friend and co-pupil Drupada to give him a cow to feed his only little child Aśvatthāmā.

The *ṛishis*, so simple and neglectful of even their bare necesities, may not have had that much for the satisfaction of their hunger even from day to day, but still with a heart so full of love, overflowing with *kindness, welcomed guests and shared with them whatever they had.* That is why Manu has said, the humblet can still cool the heart of the guests arrived. A few blades of grass as a seat or even the prepared ground itself in the hermitage which is just cleansed and purified by a smear of cowdung, cool water, and the last and most important item, sweet words of welcome, these never fail in the homes of the good:

तृणानि भूमिरुदकं वाक् चतुर्थी च सूनृता ।
एतान्यपि सतां गेहे नोच्छिद्यन्ते कदाचन ॥

Mamusmṛiti

In the *Taittirīya* it has been clearly stated thus. Never delay or deny hospitality to any. This shall be the rule. Hence, by every possible means, enough food should be acquired. In fact food is prepared for the guests as they say. Food offered first to the guest begets for the giver himself the best first. If the food is given secondly to the guest. the giver also gets it so. When the guest is offered last the giver also gets it last. This is as much as to to say that depending on the joy and eagerness for giving the food to the guest vaxes prosperity in food for the giver himself:

न कं चन वसतौ प्रत्याचक्षीत । तद् व्रतम् । तस्माद्यया कया चन विधया बह्वन्न प्राप्नुयात् । अराध्यस्मा अन्नमित्याचक्षते ।

एतद्वै मुखतोऽन्नं राद्धम् । मुखतोऽस्मा अन्नं राध्यते ।
एतद्वै मध्यतोऽन्नं राद्धम् । मध्यतोऽस्मा अन्नं राध्यते ।
एतद्वा अन्ततोऽन्नं राद्धम् । अन्ततोऽस्मा अन्नं राध्यते ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 3,10,1.

The love and affection of the sage is almost proverbial. It is evident from the story in the *Ādiparva* of the *Mahābhārata* where Paushya without realising that the food given by him to Uttanka was cooked by a woman with unbound hair, a hair being found in it, could anger Uttaṅka like the true *Brāhmaṇa* sage he was to curse him to be blind. Without looking into the food, the king retaliated by cursing him to go without progeny. The moment it was pointed out to him that Uttaṅka was right, he regretted his action and addressed him, Oh reverend Sir! unknowingly this polluted food has been given to you; grace me by withdrawing your curse and save me from becoming blind. Immediately Uttaṅka retracted his curse and assured him that his blindness would be momentary and he would regain his sight. But similarly asked by him, Paushya being a *Kshatriya*, though convince of having cursed him without reason for it, would not recall his curse, as he still felt his ire had not cooled:

न मृषा ब्रमीमि । भूत्वा त्वमन्धो न चिरादनन्धो भविष्यसीति ।
ममापि शापो भवता दत्तो न भवेदिति । तं पौष्यः प्रत्युवाच ।
न चाहं शक्तः शापं प्रत्यादातुम् । न हि मे मन्युरुपशमं गच्छति ।
किं चैतद्भवता न ज्ञायते यथा ।
नवनीतं हृदयं ब्राह्मणस्य वाचि क्षुरो निहितः ।
तदुभयमेतद्विपरीतं क्षत्रियस्य वाङ्नवनीतं हृदयं तीक्ष्णधारम् ॥

Mahābhārata 1,3,121-123.

He explains it further by expatiating that the heart of a *Brāhmaṇa* is soft like butter but the tongue as a razor with sharp edge. Both these are differerent in the case of a *Kshatriya* whose utterance is sweet like butter, but the heart razor sharp.

Instances abound in literature. We can take the case of the celestial nymph Hariṇī who was born Indumatī the queen of Aja. Vaśishṭha, in his message assuaging the grief of Aja, gives the episode of the sage Tṛiṇabiṅdu who performed such severe penace, that in sheer fear of it Indra sent the nymph Hariṇī to disturb his meditation.

By the anger that arose from the impediment eaused to his contemplation, the disturbed sage, like the tempestuous wave of the deluge, cursed her to be born a mortal on earth, even as she was brandishing her alluring charm in his presence. But, when she begged of him to forgive her for an act she could not avoid as in the entourage of the lord of the celestials, the kind-hearted one made her earthly existence limited to the time she could see a celestial flower. Thus having been born in the royal family of the Krathakaiśikas and having been so long your queen, she has now regained the heaven she lost by the very cause that put an end to her curse:

चरतः किल दुश्चरं तपस्तृणबिंदोः परिशङ्कितः पुरा ।
प्रजिघाय समाधिभेदिनीं हरिरस्मै हरिणीं सुराङ्गनाम् ॥
स तपःप्रतिबन्धमन्युना प्रमुखाविष्कृतचारुविभ्रमाम् ।
अशपद्भुव मानुषीति तां शमवेलाप्रलयोर्मिणा मुनिः ॥
भगवन् परवानयं जनः प्रतिकूलाचरितं क्षमस्व मे ।
इति चोपनतां क्षितिस्पृशं कृतवाना सुरपुष्पदर्शनात् ॥
क्रथकैशिकवंशसम्भवा तव भूत्वा महिषी चिराय सा ।
उपलब्धवती दिवश्च्युतं विवशा शापनिवृत्तिकारणम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 8,79-82.

Another instance is of the sage Mataṅga who cursed Priyaṁvada. Assuming his original celestial form from that of the elephant that was slightly hit by Aja by an arrow, Priyaṁvada told him that he was the son of the Vidyādhara emperor Priyadarśana, how his pride was the cause of the curse of sage Mataṅga that transformed him into an elephant. But when penitently saluted and pacified, the anger of the great sage subsided, and he became soft which he usually always was by nature. Warmth in water is either by heating with fire, or by contact with solar rays, but the natural property of water is coolness. When prince Aja of the Ikshvāku family hits you with an arrow you would be freed from the curse and regain your original form. So favoured me the sage a treasure-house of penance:

मतङ्गशापादवलेपमूलादवाप्तवानस्मि मतंगजत्वम् ।
अवेहि गन्धर्वपतेस्तनूजं प्रियंवदं मां प्रियदर्शनस्य ॥
स चानुनीतः प्रणतेन पश्चान्मया महर्षिर्मृदुतामगच्छत् ।
उष्णत्वमग्न्यातपसंप्रयोगाच्छैत्यं हि यत्सा प्रकृतिर्जलस्य ॥

इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवो यदा ते भेत्स्यत्यजः कुम्भमयोमुखेन ।
संयोक्ष्यसे स्वेन वपुर्महिम्ना तदेत्यवोचत्स तपोनिधिर्माम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5,53-55.

There are several instances like this of a curse pronounced and immediately withdrawn, because a sage could never be harsh, is easily moved to pity, and would never nurse anger except for a few moments.

The deep affection of even those among the *ṛishis,* who had completely given up all attachments in this world, is easily seen in the utterance of Kaṇva who is in tears when Śakuntalā departs for her husband's home. In fact Śakuntalā was his foster daughter, found as a baby lying neglected, taken care of and brought up by him like a daughter. The attachment is so great that he wonders how he could burst into tears like that. That Śakuntalā is leaving today, touches my heart, with so much of a longing for her, my throat so choked with tears that I can hardly restrain. My vision is dimmed by sorrow. For me a denizen of the forest, merely because of affection bestowed, the mental weakness is indeed so very much, that I wonder how much more householders when they experience the first separation from their daughters would feel by the torment of that sorrow:

यास्यत्यद्य शकुन्तलेति हृदयं संस्पृष्टमुत्कण्ठया
कण्ठः स्तम्भितवाष्पवृत्तिकलुषश्चिन्ताजडं दर्शनम् ।
वैक्लव्यं मम तावदीदृशमहो स्नेहादरण्यौकसः
पीड्यन्ते गृहिणः कथं नु तनयाविश्लेषदुःखैर्नवैः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,6.

Kaṇva is not only so kind to Śakuntalā, but the attachment is so great and the heart so melts like butter, that he feels and actually expresses a sense of relief that by her good deeds Śakuntalā is united to a husband most suited for her, whom he had already chosen for her; and he again points to a Navamālikā plant that has entwined itself around the mango tree to enjoy with affection what is equally a plant wedding. This now relieves him of his anxiety regarding the plant, as it has been entrusted to the care of the tree. And he himself, in the case of both Śakuntalā and the creeper is free from all anxiety about their future:

मंकल्पितं प्रथममेव मया तवार्थे
भर्तारमात्मसदृशं सुकृतैर्गता त्वम् ।
चूतेन संगतवती नवमालिकेय
मस्यामहं त्वयि च संप्रति वीतचिन्तः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,13.

It does not stop only with Śakuntalā. The *ṛishis* are so kind that they would allow anything in the case of the pet deer in the hermitage, allow them even to nestle in their lap, even as they are lost in deep meditation, though it disturbs their meditation. *Bhāva* matters as Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita has very well put it. Striking Śiva with the same flowers that devotees use with the intent of worshipping him, even as he was scattering them with the idea he would strike him, Cupid was reduced to ashes. Thus Śiva, is concerned only with the intention in the mind and not the external use of the object. That Lord is my deity. I would not even utter the name of any other (Fig. 80):

अर्चामीति धिया यदेव कुसुमं क्षिप्त्वा जनो मुच्यते
विध्यामीति धिया तदेव विकिरन् भस्मीकृतो मन्मथः ।
इत्याभ्यन्तरवृत्तिमात्ररसिको बाह्यानपेक्षश्च यः
स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 2.

But the same meditation disturbed by celestial nymphs of ravishing beauty and charm threatens them always with a curse; and that is why the most successful of nymphs possessed of the acme of charm and perfection would still remonstrate with Indra before approaching a sage, as they well knew the dire consequences of such action:

अयं सुरपते घोरो विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः ।
क्रोधमुत्सृक्ष्यते घोरं मयि देव न संशयः ॥
ततो हि मे भयं देव प्रसादं कर्तुमर्हसि ।

Rāmāyaṇa 1,64,3-4.

The sages always wished good for the entire world. They would always try to help the king to establish *dharma*, though they were free from all attachments. In fact, we have to remember that the father of Śriṅgi, Śamīka, a sage of great forbearance, being told by his son that he had cursed Parīkshit for his haughty behaviour in put-

ting a dead snake on his father's neck, under the mistaken notion that he had disregarded him by failing to welcome him to his hermitage, though ectually, being in a vow of silence, he could not reply his queries, still the sage, who had patiently borne the insult, felt so much for the ruler as the protector of *dharma*, that he expressed his disapproval of his son's act, but knowing the potency and the power of the penance of his son though yet almost a child, felt very sorry for the king, and sent his disciple to forewarn the king of the calamity that was ahead of him:

न मे प्रियं कृतं तात नैष धर्मस्तपस्विनाम् ।.....
न ह्यर्हति नृपः शापमस्मत्तः पुत्र सर्वथा ।
परीक्षिते नृपतये दयापन्नो महायशाः ॥
शिष्यं गौरमुखं नाम शीलवन्तं गुणान्वितम् ॥
आचख्यौ स च विश्रान्तो राज्ञः सर्वमशेषतः ॥
ऋषिः परमधर्मात्मा दान्तः शान्तो महातपाः ।.....
क्षान्तवान्स्तव तत्कर्म पुत्रस्तस्य न चक्षमे ॥
तेन शप्तोसि राजेन्द्र पितुरज्ञातमद्य वै ।
तक्षकः सप्तरात्रेण मृत्युस्तव भविष्यति ॥
तत्र रक्षां कुरुष्वेति पुनः पुनरथाब्रवीत् ।

Mahābhārata 1,41,20,33;13,16,18-21.

Vālmīki who is so deeply introspective has indeed the greatest regard for Rāma for his truthfulness, for his extracting the thorn of the three worlds Rāvaṇa, and for his humble nature that knew no pride, and yet, knowing the circumstances so well, has still an iota of anger towards Rāma for having been so unkind as he felt towards Sītā:

उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञेऽप्यविकत्थनेऽपि ।
त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 14,73.

But he reassures Sītā as he expresses in his inimitable way the warmth of his kindess and affection, as he addresses her. Your world-famed father-in-law was my friend. Your father who could end cycles of births and deaths for even saints was also my comrade. You yourself are the foremost among the women who adore their husbands as their deity. What is there in you that does not upsurge my compassion for you:

तवोरुकीर्तिः स्वशुरः सखा मे सतां भवोच्छेदकरः पिता ते ।
धुरि स्थिता त्वं पतिदेवतानां किं तन्न येनासि ममानुकम्प्या ।।

Raghuvaṁśa 14,74.

Vālmīki represents the easily moved tender heart of a *ṛishi* in general as seen in his spontaneous grief bursting into poetry at the sight of a Krauñcha bird shot from a loving pair by a hunter (Fig. 24) as pointed out earlier:

निषादविद्धाण्डजदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ।।

Raghuvaṁśa 14,70.

When the beautiful girl Pramadvarā, the child born of the nymph Menakā and the Gandharva king Viśvāvasu and brought up, like Śakuntalā by Kaṇva, in his hermitage by sage Sthūlakeśa, won the admiration and love of the hermit boy Ruru, son of sage Pramati and grandson of Chyavana and Sukanyā, and the sages had joyously fixed their wedding day, she suddenly died of snake bite, all the sages in the neighbourhood including such great ones as Ātreya, Kuśika, Uddālaka, Kaṭha, Bharadvāja and Gautama came to console, but themselves could not help bursting into tears. It is the pitiable sobs of Ruru that moved the celestials themselves to restore Pramadvarā back to life when Ruru gladly gave away a half of his life as ransom:

ततः सर्वे द्विजवराः समाजग्मुः कृपान्विताः ।
स्वस्त्यात्रेयो महाजानुः कुशिकः शंखमेखलः ।।
उद्दालकः कठश्चैव श्वेतश्चैव महायशाः ।
भरद्वाजः कौनकुत्स्य आर्ष्टिषेणोऽथ गौतमः ।।
प्रमतिः सह पुत्रेण तथान्ये वनवासिनः ।
तां ते कन्यां व्यसुं दृष्ट्वा भुजङ्गस्य विषार्दिताम् ।।
रुरुदुः कृपयाविष्टा रुरुस्त्वार्तो बहिर्ययौ ।.....
रुरुश्चुक्रोश गहनं वनं गत्वातिदुःखितः ।.....
यथा च जन्मप्रभृति यतात्माहं दृढव्रतः ।
प्रमद्वरा तथा ह्येषा समुत्तिष्ठतु भामिनी ।।.....
उत्तिष्ठत्वायुषोर्धेन रुरोरेव समन्विता ।
एवमुक्ते ततः कन्या सोदतिष्ठत्प्रमद्वरा ।।

Mahābhārata 1,8,24-27,9,1,5,15-16.

As Aśvaghosha puts it, Ruru's love for Pramadvarā was so great that he not only restored her to life by giving up half his life but even

jeopardised his peace and penance by killing snakes wherever he saw them:

प्रमद्वरायां च रुरुः प्रियायां भुजङ्गमेनापहृतेन्द्रियायाम् ।
संदृश्य संदृश्य जघान सर्पान् प्रियं न रोषेण तपो ररक्ष ॥

Saundarananda 7,37.

The sages moved to tears, recall that it is no wonder, when even a warrior like Caeser could shed tears as Shakespeare has it 'when that the poor have cried Caeser hath wept'. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma similarly grieves moved by the grief of his beloved subjects:

व्यसनेषु मनुष्याणां मृशं भवति दुःखितः ।

Rāmāyaṇa 2,1.

But an extraordinary surging kindness for the threee worlds to save whom one could give away ones own life is a rare phenomenon. The *ṛishi* is so kind-hearted that he would not think twice when requested for a good cause to give up his life itself. The case is that of Dadhīcha. Vṛitra was such a menace to Indra that all the *devas* headed by their lord consulted what was to be done of Brahmā with their hands clasped. Brahmā who already knew their predicament counselled them in the procedure of slaying Vṛitra. There is a sage of very noble disposition named Dadhīcha of the utmost *dhārmik* disposition and very kind in thought. If he were requested by all of you to give you his bones for the good of all the three worlds, he would certainly put an end to his body to make available his bones to you, the celestials, to be made into a thunderbolt of such potency that with a thunderous noise it would slay the unassailable enemy.

The *devas* accordingly with Nārāyaṇa as their leader went to the hermitage of Dadhīcha on the banks of the river Sarasvatī in a very peaceful atmosphere. Here they saw Dadhīcha lustrous like the sun or even like Brahmā himself. Falling at his feet with the utmost reverence, they requested him the impossible gift of his bones. The sage immediately felt immensely pleased and replied, Oh celestials ! I shall certainly do whatever would benefit you, and shall immediately give up this body. Having so uttered, that greatest of mortals with the highest self-control gave up his life by withdrawing his vital breath. The celestials gathered the bones from his corpse. Now

happy that they were assured of their victory, they requested the celestial smith Tvashṭā to prepare the *vajra* of terrible form with six spokes, a thunderbolt that could reduce to ashes the enemy of the gods. That was the only way the lord of the celestials could establish himself in heaven by overcoming all his obstacles:

ततो वृत्रवधे यत्नमकुर्वन्त्रिदशाः पुरा ।
पुरन्दरं पुरस्कृत्य ब्रह्माणमुपतस्थिरे ॥
कृतांजलीस्तु तान् सर्वान्परमेष्ठीत्युवाच ह ।
विदितं मे सुराः सर्वं यद्वः कार्यं चिकीर्षितम् ॥
तमुपायं प्रवक्ष्यामि यथा वृत्रं वधिष्यथ ।
दधीच इति विख्यातो महानृषिरुदारधीः ॥
तं गत्वा सहिताः सर्वे वरं वै संप्रयाचत ।
स वो दास्यति धर्मात्मा सुप्रीतेनान्तरात्मना ॥
स वाच्यः सहितैः सर्वैर्भवद्भिर्जयकांक्षिभिः ।
स्वान्यस्थीनि प्रयच्छेति त्रैलोक्यस्य हिताय वै ॥
स शरीरं समुत्सृज्य स्वान्यस्थीनि प्रदास्यति ।
तस्यास्थिभिर्महाघोरं वज्रं संस्क्रियतां दृढम् ।
तेन वज्रेण वै वृत्रं वधिष्यति शतक्रतुः ॥.....
एवमुक्तास्ततो देवा अनुमान्य पितामहम् ।
नारायणं पुरस्कृत्य दधीचस्याश्रमं ययुः ॥
सरस्वत्याः परे पारे नानाद्रुमलतावृतम् ।.....
जाज्वल्यमानं वपुषा यथा लक्ष्म्या पितामहम् ॥
तस्य पादौ सुरा राजन्नभिवाद्य प्रणम्य च ।
अयाचन्त वरं सर्वे यथोक्तं परमेष्ठिना ॥
ततो दधीचः परमप्रतीतः सुरोत्तमांस्तानिदमभ्युवाच ।
करोमि यद्वो हितमद्य देवाः स्वं चापि देहं स्वयमुत्सृजामि ॥
स एवमुक्त्वा द्विपदां वरिष्ठः प्राणान् वशी स्वान्सहसोत्ससर्ज ।
ततः सुरास्ते जगृहुः परासोरस्थीनि तस्याथ यथोपदेशम् ॥
प्रहृष्टरूपाश्च जयाय देवास्त्वष्टारमागम्य तमर्थमूचुः ।
त्वष्टा तु तेषां वचनं निशम्य प्रहृष्टरूपः प्रयतः प्रयत्नात् ॥
चकार वज्रं भृशमुग्ररूपं कृत्वा च शक्रं स उवाच हृष्टः ।
अनेन वज्रप्रवरेण देवा भस्मीकुरुष्वाद्य सुरारिमुग्रम् ॥

Mahābhārata 3,100,5-24.

With their simple spirit, the *ṛishis* are highly appreciative. They would never miss an opportunity to praise something great and noble and take a delight in those encouraging *dharma*. When it is said that Rāma entered the forest to prevent his father from transgressing

truth, almost hurrying to the Daṇḍaka, he not only entered the forest but also entered the minds of all the *ṛishis*:

विवेश दण्डकारण्यं प्रत्येकं च सतां मनः ।

Raghuvaṁśa 12,9.

It is the appreciative mind of the *ṛishis* he entered. It is not without reason that Śarabhaṅga, Sutīkshṇa and even Agastya wait the arrival of Rāma, Atri included. Anasuyā's appreciation of Rāma is also echoed in her praise for Sītā for being so devoted to Rāma and to whom she had given the heavenly toilet, dress and ornaments which proclaimed Sītā even as she entered Ayodhyā on her return from Laṅkā with an effulgence all around her and a celestial perfume, as if she was still from the fire to prove to her husband and all assembled that she was by her own merit immaculate:

स्फुरत्प्रभामण्डलमानसूयं सा बिभ्रती शाश्वतमङ्गरागम् ।
रराज शुद्धेति पुनः स्वपुण्यैः सन्दर्शिता वह्निगतेव भर्त्रा ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 14,14.

Rāma, not any less a *ṛishi* being a *Rajaṛishi* (Fig. 81), with due regard and appreciation of the *ṛishis* though himself a sage in the forest of a royal palace and though in a vow of ahsolute silence, out of respect for Vālmīki and other sages, moves towards them:

राज्याश्रमनिवासोऽपि प्राप्तकाष्ठमुनिव्रतः ।
वाल्मीकिगौरवादार्य इत एवाभिवर्तते ॥

Uttararāmacharita 7,1.

Durvāsā, the most irascible sage who is least appreciative, himself goes into raptures over the simple but unparalleled *dāna* or giving away in sacrifice his food in its entirety, least caring for his own life, regardless of pinching hunger, and exclaims that Mudgala's sacrifice was beyond all praise:

त्वत्समो नास्ति लोकेऽस्मिन् दाता मात्सर्यवर्जितः ।.....
अहो दानं विधुष्टं ते सुमहत्स्वर्गवसिभिः ॥

Mahābhārata 3,260,23,29.

When Hanumān in a wondrous manner magnifies himself into a vast form almost expanding *yojanas*, his body appearing almost beyond measure, to cross the ocean to search for Sītā in Laṅkā, the *ṛishis*

watching him spontaneously exclaim their wonder and the highest appreciation of this unprecedented deed:

ऋषयस्तुष्टुवुश्चैनं प्लवमानं विहायसि ।

Rāmāyaṇa 5,1.

It was not merely a silent appreciation but a chorus of loud exclamation of praise not by lesser beings that wonder easily even at trivial things but by those who had realised the highest Absolute and for whom nothing except something extraordinary like this would appeal so much as to proclaim their wonder and appreciation. They cannot help saying that with form assumed surpassing a mountain in size, Hanumān son of Marut himself in great speed was determined to cross the vast ocean, abode of huge whales, for the noblest cause of Rāma himself. This is the text of the utterance of the *ṛishis* that was heard by all including the celestials, Siddhas, Nāgas, Gandharvas, and all the others that watched with wonder:

शुश्रुवुश्च तदा शब्दं ऋषीणां भावितात्मनाम् ।
एष पर्वतसङ्काशो हनुमान् मारुतात्मनः ।
तितीर्षति महावेगः समुद्रं मकरालयम् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 5,1,

Similarly when Kuśa and Lava in almost the voice of Kinnaras sweetly sang the great theme of Rāma and Sītā from the *Rāmāyaṇa* a classic poem of the great sage Vālmīki on the most noble theme, the *ṛishis* were moved almost to tears and knew not how to reward the two boys. It is no wonder that Kālidāsa describes the situation itself in a befitting verse:

वृत्तं रामस्य वाल्मीकेः कृतिस्तौ किन्नरस्वनौ ।
किं तद्येन मनो हर्तुमलं स्यातां न शृण्वताम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 15,64.

The appreciation of the sages though the highest should not be judged by the value of the reward that they gave to the young boys. The *ṛishis* could ill afford costly presents, but whatever they had, they freely gave which is the real spirit of sacrifice and appreciation. One gave a bark garment, another a *kamaṇḍalu*, a third a deer skin, yet another a waist cord of *muñja* grass, another a sacred thread,

a rosary of beads and so on which was all in the highest spirit of appreciation.

तच्छ्रुत्वा मुनयः सर्वे वाष्पपर्याकुलेक्षणाः ॥
साधु साध्विति तावूचुः परं विस्मयमागताः ।
ते प्रीतमनसः सर्वे मुनयो धर्मवत्सलाः ॥
प्रीतः कश्चिन्मुनिस्ताभ्यामुत्थितः कलशं ददौ ॥
प्रसन्नो वल्कलं कश्चिद्दौ ताभ्यां महायशाः ।
अन्यः कृष्णाजिनं प्रादान्मौञ्जीमन्यो मुनिर्ददौ ॥
यज्ञसूत्रमथापरः.....जपमालामथापरः.....
आयुष्यमपरे प्राहुर्मुदा तत्र महर्षयः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,4,15,20-25.

Vālmīki says there then commenced the sweet song that excelled celestial melody and the listeners could never get satiated by this treasure of music.

ततः प्रवृत्तं मधुरं गान्धर्वमतिमानुषम् ।
न च तृप्तिं ययुः सर्वे श्रोतारो मानसम्पदा ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,94,15.

The *ṛishis* poor in material wealth were, nevertheless, rich in spiritual essence. They could by *praṇidhāna* or meditation see before their eyes the past, present and future in a trice. Everything appeared to them in its true form as truth was never hidden from them and all that they saw was just the bare truth. When Dilīpa in great distress because of his lack of progeny beseeched Vasiṣhtha to suggest him a method to have righteous offspring to continue his line, the great sage went into a trance. By his profound meditation, he discovered the cause of the obstacle in the way of progeny for the king. In an inspired mood he gave out to him the result of his insight:

सोऽपश्यत्प्राणिधानेन सन्ततेः स्तम्भकारणम् ।
भावितात्मा भुवो भर्तुरथैनं प्रत्यभाषत ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1,74.

It is then that he informs him how he had failed to perambulate and adore the celestial cow who was under the Kalpa tree, his mind distracted by other ideas when naturally he failed to observe her presence. She had hence cursed that he could not have a son without adoring her own offspring:

अवजानासि मां यस्मादतस्ते न भविष्यति ।
मत्प्रसूतिमनाराध्य प्रजेति त्वां शशाप सा ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1,77.

When Vālmīki met Sītā lamenting, abandoned by Rāma near his hermitage, he had no need to question her as he already knew by the power of his meditation that she had been abandoned by her lord. Kindly he addresses her to assuage her grief and tells her that he knew by his power of meditation that her husband had abandoned her perturbed in his mind by false calumny. You should not grieve therefore over this. He kindly hails her, Oh daughter of Janaka Vaideha! Know that you have come here to your own parental home, only situated elsewhere and not in its own place in Mithilā. He means that by that he is himself her father as much as Janaka himself. The great *Rājaṛishi* Janaka like Rāma knew the innocence of Sītā, and equally well Vālmīki, as also the helplessness of Rāma himself who, knowing the innocence of Sītā had to do this only to set an example to the world of how to avert any calamity of *adharma* that could happen on a pretext:

जाने विसृष्टां प्राणिधानतस्त्वां मिथ्यापवादक्षुभितेन भर्त्रा ।
तन्मा व्यथिष्ठा विषयान्तरस्थं प्राप्तासि वैदेहि पितुर्निकेतम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1,72.

When Aditi requests Kaśyapa to send word to Kaṇva about the happy end of the grief of Śakuntalā united with her lord again, the sage reminds her that there was no such need as Kaṇva, by his own meditative power, had already come to know of this event, but still, to satisfy her, he sends a disciple of his to inform him how everything had ended well:

अदितिः—भगवन् ! अस्य दुहितृमनोरथसंपत्तेः कण्वोऽपि
तावच्छ्रुतविस्तरः क्रियताम् ।
मारीचः—तपःप्रभावात्प्रत्यक्षं सर्वमेव तत्रभवतः ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7

In spite of such profundity of vision, revealing to them what normally could never even be imagined, realising before their eyes what was almost beyond vision and mental approach, there yet was an illusion divine that could elude even such great seers. This was

the *māyā* of the Supreme Being. An excellent example of this is found in the case of Mārkaṇḍeya narrated in several *Purāṇas* and in the *Mahābhārata*. It is also in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, *Bhāgavata* and other texts. Mārkaṇḍeya is a great figure as a seer who had the special favour of Śiva who singled him out for being protected from untimely death. The special favour that Śiva showed to Mārkaṇḍeya in his aspect as Kālāntaka which is also Mārkaṇḍeyānugrahamūrti is given by Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita. Did not even Rāma himself, that great lord, the most majestic wielder of the bow in all the three worlds, who got the special Sāntānika world vouchsafed for all those that followed him into the Sarayū, get reminded to leave the mortal world at the appointed hour by Death himself? Even that Death was kicked out from his life by that great ocean of mercy to protect an insignificant *Brahmachārī* boy who sought his protection. That lord is my deity and any other would not be even uttered by me by name:

वः सान्तानिकलोकदस्त्रिजगतां कोदण्डदीक्षागुरुः
सोऽप्याहूयत मर्त्यभावभजनात्काले न कालेन किम् ।
तादृक्षोऽपि स कस्य चिद्द्विजवटोस्त्राणाय येनाहतः
स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नाऽपि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjari 9.

It has to be recalled here that the protector of the three worlds Vishṇu born as Rāma was called back by Yama who came in the guise of a sage to remind the king when he was to return from the mortal world. It is an allusion to that and to Sāntānika or the special great heaven that was vouchsafed for the people of Ayodhyā who followed Rāma to drown themselves in Sarayū out of affection for him. Even that Yama who could remind the Lord himself was punished by Śiva for daring to use his noose in the case of Mārkaṇḍeya even as he was adoring the *Śivaliṅga* in worship. The glory of Kālāntakamūrti as Dīkshita puts it lies in the Devī to the left of Siva in his hermophrodite form, her leg acting for administering the blow that humbled Death himself. That is why Dīkshita says, in the comparatively easy conquest of Cupid achieved by the eye on the forehead, please do allow Sīva to have the entire credit, but Oh mother! what right has even the conqueror of the Tripuras to claim credit for what your left leg alone sueceeded in achieving:

साधारणे स्मरजये निटिलाक्षिसाध्ये
भागी शिवो भवतु नाम यशः समग्रम् ।
वामङ्घ्रिमात्रकलिते जननि त्वदीये
का वा प्रसक्तिरिह कालजये पुरारेः ।।

Ānandasāgarastava 56.

A representation at Ellora of the eighth century, a Rāshṭrakūṭa carving, is a lovely one, illustrating the theme (Fig. 82). In the magnificent Kālāri of the early Choḷa school of the time of Rājarāja from the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tañjāvur (Fig. 83), the wall on either side of the niche in which Śiva is enshrined dancing on prostrate Yama at his feet, there is Mārkaṇḍeya on to the left clinging to the *liṅga* in despair and Yama to the right with his noose to fetch the life of the devoted hermit boy. The overcoming of Death meant eternal life for Mārkaṇḍeya, and among the *chirañjīvis*, those who live during the aeons irrespective of the deluge that may now and then come and go with the end of a *yuga*, Mārkaṇḍeya is one.

Mārkaṇḍeya was anxious to have an idea of the *māyā* of Vishṇu which is suggestive of the highest philosophic thought which is incomprehensible. Vishṇu promised and vouchsafed him the vision. Yudhishṭhira, visited by Mārkaṇḍeya, who had come to comfort him in the forest where he was living in *vanavāsa*, requested by him to narrate his experience of *vishṇumāyā* describes to him a graphic picture of almost the impossible that happened in his life.

The Lord is the creator and is the transformer, is the essence of the elements, their creator and lord, difficult to meditate on, a great wonder indeed, the holiest of holy, with neither a beginning nor an end. He is the Universal Being, undiminishing, imperishable, the creator, uncreated, the cause of all action, incomprehensible even to those who know all the *Vedas* from the beginning. There are four *yugas* calculated in thousands of years and in that calculation, a small part is dawn or dusk extending over thousands of years again, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali with the intermediate period between them. With the end of Kali begins again the Kṛita aeon. Then is the deluge when there is just a little left of each aeon. When people deteriorate ethically, the clouds move in the sky dark like the blue lotus, yellow like

the pollen, of golden colour like herons, red like the lotus, some like herds of elephants, yet others dark like *makara* crocodiles, with streaks of lightning on them, terrible to behold, roaring and thundering frightfully, continuously pouring for a full twelve years, completely submerging the universe by their downpour, when transgessing its limits the ocean goes beyond its bonndary. Inhaling that wild breath, the lord of the lotus sleeps in the flower in that one mass of water so frightful to behold, with all movable and immovable things submerged and lost, where there is neither atmospheric space nor any other. Alone I had been wandering here and there, finding none else around. Having tramped ever so long and ever so fatigued, I saw in that mass of water a huge and spreading banyan tree on a long bough of which on a leaf there was seated a child with eyes wide like the lotus petal and face like the moon. Bewildered I pondered how a child could sleep quietly like that when the whole universe was destroyed. With all the power of my penance I could not comprehend the child. He looked the very abode of the goddess of prosperity herself, lustrous with the *śrīvatsa* mark on his chest. The child spoke so sweetly. I note you are tired and want to rest. Oh Mārkaṇḍeya! Sit here. Go into my body, great seer! When I was almost despairing of life and even existence, the boy opened his mouth and without the least effort on my part I entered it, went into his stomach, and there I saw in him with great wonder the entire universe, all the rivers like Gaṅgā, Śutudrī, Yamunā, Kauśikī, Sindhu, Godāvarī, Narmadā and all the other holy streams. The ocean I saw there, receptacle of great gems and filled with aquatic monsters. I saw the sky lit up by the moon and the sun, lustrous like the fire and wild forests. Here were sacrificing Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas equally engaged in their valorous acts and all the others. Here appeared mountains like Himavān, Hemakūṭa, Mandara, Gandhamādana, Meru, Malaya and others, all living creepers on earth were there and in him were all the hordes of celestials starting with Indra, the Sādhyas, Rudras, Ādityas, Pitṛis, Nāgas, Gandharvas and so forth. Every conceivable thing was there, the entire universe. I could never see the end of anything as it was a wonderful long endless panorama. And even as I was wondering, I was brought out by the force of the speediest breath through his open mouth. Again I found the boy on the branch of the banyan tree. Almost smiling the boy spoke to me.

Have you rested for a while in my body, Mārkaṇḍeya? I caught hold of his pink tender feet, placed my head on them and humbly bowed to him, with my hands brought together in reverence. Oh my lord! I want to know all about you and this your great illusion. I had seen everything in your abdomen. I went in and returned without any volition of mine. How is it as a little child you are here after having consumed the entire universe? How long are you to be here in this state? So asked by me, the child reassuringly spoke to me. Even the great celestials have not known me. Because of my love for you I am telling you this. You are devoted to your father. You are a great *Brahmaṛishi*. You have sought refuge in me and your *Brahmacharya* is so great that I indicate it to you. The waters were originally called by me *nāra*, and they being my abode, I am spoken of as Nārāyaṇa, the creator of all beings and the destroyer. I am Vishṇu, I am Brahmā, Indra the lord of celestials, Kubera, Śiva, Soma, Prajāpati, and Kaśyapa. I am everything. Agni is my mouth, my feet are the earth, the sky and moon are my eyes, the sky is my head, the directions are my ears, the waters my essence, my breath is in my mind. I do the sacrifices and the knowledgeable in the *Vedas* perform several sacrifices for me. As the *Nāga* Śesha I support the earth surrounded by the four oceans and decorated by mountains like Meru and Mandara. The earth that was immersed was raised by me as Varāha. I drink up the waters as fire in the form of *vaḍavā*. Brahma is from my face, Kshatriya from my arms, Vaiśya from my thighs, and the Śūdra from my feet in that order. The *Ṛigveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda* all arise from me and go back into me. In meditation I am contemplated on by rare great ascetics in great peace, thirsting for knowledge of me, free from desires, anger, jealousy, shunning company and sin, ever ethical, free from ego and ever erudite in the highest of knowledge of the Absolute. I am the encircling fire, wind, sun, and stars in the sky, the oceans clothe me and act as my couch and are my abode. Whenever there is deterioration of merit and the uprise of demerit I create myself to set this right. For thousands of cycles of aeons I sleep on as the personification of the universe, bewildering all beings. This is my eternal stay in the form of a child though I am not a child, a guise assumed till Brahmā awakes. I had as Brahmā promised a boon for you long ago. Pleased with you as a worshipful seer and as you were fatigued I have shown you this divine vision

when the whole world is one sheet of water, with everything lost and submerged. Having so said, the child disappered. Oh king Yudhishthira! I had seen this wonder long ago and received a boon from him that I would never forget it and that I would have the longest life and death according to my wish. The great ancient being is Krishna of the Vrishni family who supports all this. You should seek refuge of him and he will protect you:

तस्मादिच्छाम्यहं श्रोतुं सर्वहेत्वात्मिकां कथाम् ॥
अनुभूतं हि वहुशस्त्वयैकेन द्विजोत्तम ।.....
एष कर्ता विकर्ता च भूतानां भूतकृत्प्रभुः ।
अचिन्त्यं महदाश्चर्यं पवित्रमिति चोच्यते ॥
अनादिनिधनं भूतं विश्वमव्ययमक्षयम् ।
एष कर्ता न क्रियते कारणं चापि पौरुषे ॥
यद्येष पुरुषो वेद वेदा अपि न तं विदुः ।
सर्वमाश्चर्यमेवैतन्निर्वृत्तं राजसत्तम ॥
आदितो मनुजव्याघ्र कृत्स्नस्य जगतः क्षये ।
चत्वार्याहुः सहस्राणि वर्षाणां तत्कृतं युगम् ॥
तस्य तावच्छती सन्ध्या सन्ध्यांशश्च तथाविधः ।
त्रीणि वर्षसहस्राणि त्रेतायुगमिहोच्यते ॥
तस्य तावच्छती सन्ध्या सन्ध्यांशश्च ततः परम् ।
तथा वर्षसहस्रे द्वे द्वापरं परिमाणतः ॥.....
क्षीणे कलियुगे चैव प्रवर्तेत कृतं युगम् ।
एषा द्वादशसाहस्री युगाख्या परिकीर्तिता ॥
एतत्सहस्रपर्यन्तमहो ब्राह्ममुदाहृतम् ।
विश्वं हि ब्रह्मभवने सर्वतः परिवर्तते ॥.....
उत्तिष्ठन्ति महामेघा नभस्यद्भुतदर्शनाः ॥
केचिन्नीलोत्पलश्यामाः केचित्कुमुदसंनिभाः ।
केचित्किञ्जल्कसंकाशाः केचित्पीताः पयोधराः ॥
केचिद्धारिद्रसंकाशाः कारण्डवनिभास्तथा ।
केचित्कमलपत्राभाः केचिद्भिङ्गुलसंनिभाः ॥
केचित्पुरवराकाराः केचिद्गजकुलोपमाः ।
केचिदञ्जनसंकाशाः केचिन्मकरसंनिभाः ॥
विद्युन्मालापिनद्धाङ्गाः समुत्तिष्ठन्ति वै घनाः ।
घोररूपा महाराज घोरस्वननिनादिताः ॥
ततो जलधराः सर्वे व्याप्नुवन्ति नभस्थलम् ॥
तैरियं पृथिवी सर्वा सपर्वतवनाकरा ।
आपूर्यं ते महाराज सलिलौघपरिप्लुता ॥.....

ततः समुद्रः स्वां वेलामतिक्रामति भारत ।
संवेष्टयित्वा नश्यन्ति वायुवेगपराहताः ॥
ततस्तं मारुतं घोरं स्वयम्भूर्मनुजाधिप ।
आदिः पद्मालयो देवः पीत्वा स्वपिति भारत ॥
एकार्णवे जले घोरे विचरन् पार्थिवोत्तम ।
अपश्यन्सर्वभूतानि वैक्लव्यमगमं ततः ॥
ततः सुदीर्घं गत्वाहं प्लवमानो नराधिप ।
श्रान्तः क्वचिन्न शरणं लभाम्यहमतन्द्रितः ॥
ततः कदाचित्पश्यामि तस्मिन्सलिलसञ्चये ।
न्यग्रोधं सुमहान्तं वै विशालं पृथिवीपते ॥
शाखायां तस्य वृक्षस्य विस्तीर्णायां नराधिप ।
पर्यङ्के पृथिवीपाल दिव्यास्तरणसंस्तृते ॥
उपविष्टं महाराज पद्मेन्दुसदृशाननम् ।
फुल्लपद्मविशालाक्षं बालं पश्यामि भारत ॥
ततो मे पृथिवीपाल विस्मयः सुमहानभूत् ।
कथं त्वयं शिशुः शेते लोके नाशमुपागते ॥
तपसा चिंतयंश्चापि तं शिशुं नोपलक्षये ।
भूतं भव्यं भविष्यं च जानन्नपि नराधिप ॥
अतसीपुष्पवर्णाभः श्रीवत्सांङ्कितभूषणः ।
साक्षाल्लक्ष्म्या इवावासः स तदा प्रतिभाति मे ॥
ततो मामब्रवीद्बालः स पद्मनिभलोचनः ।
श्रीवत्सधारी द्युतिमान् वाक्यं श्रुतिसुखावहम् ॥
जानामि त्वां परिश्रान्तं ततो विश्रान्तिकांक्षिणम् ।
मार्कण्डेय इहास्स्व त्वं यावदिच्छसि भार्गव ॥
अभ्यन्तरं शरीरे मे प्रविश्य मुनिसत्तम ।
आस्स्व भो विहितो वासः प्रसादस्ते कृतो मया ॥.....
ततो बालेन तेनास्यं सहसा विवृतं कृतम् ।
तस्याहमवशो वक्त्रे दैवयोगात्प्रवेशितः ॥
ततः प्रविष्टस्तत्कुक्षिं सहसा मनुजाधिप ।
सराष्ट्रनगराकीर्णां कृत्स्नां पश्यामि मेदिनीम् ॥
गङ्गां शतद्रूं सीतां च यमुनामथ कौशिकीम् ।
चर्मण्वतीं वेत्रवतीं चन्द्रभागां सरस्वतीम् ॥
सिन्धुं चैव विपाशां च नंदो गोदावरीमपि ।.....
ततः समुद्रं पश्यामि यादोगणनिषेवितम् ।
रत्नाकरमनिघ्न पयसो निधिमुत्तमम् ॥
तत्र पश्यामि गगनं चन्द्रसूर्यविराजितम् ।
जाज्वल्यमानं तेजोभिः पावकार्कसमप्रभम् ॥.....

हिमवन्तं च पश्यामि हेमकूटं च पर्वतम् ।
निषधं चापि पश्यामि श्वेतं च रजतान्वितम् ॥
मन्दरं मनुजव्याघ्र नीलं चापि महागिरिम् ।
महेन्द्रं चैव पश्यामि विन्ध्यं च गिरिमुत्तमम् ॥.....
शक्रादींश्चापि पश्यामि कृत्स्नान्देवगणानहम् ।
साध्यान् रुद्रांस्तथाऽदित्यान् गुह्यकान् पितरस्तदा ॥
सपन्नगान् सुपर्णाश्च वसूनप्यश्विनावपि ।
गन्धर्वाप्सरसो यक्षान् ऋषीश्चैव महीपते ॥.....
न च पश्यामि तस्याहं देहस्यान्तं कदाचन ॥
सततं धावमानश्च चिन्तयानो विशांपते ।.....
ततस्तमेव शरणं गतोऽस्मि विधिवत्तदा ।.....
ततोऽहं सहसा राजन् वायुवेगेन निःसृतः ।
महात्मनो मुखात्तस्य विवृतात्पुरुषोत्तम ॥
ततस्तस्यैव शाखायां न्यग्रोधस्य विशांपते ।
आस्ते मनुजशार्दूल कृत्स्नमादाय वै जगत् ॥
तेनैव बालवेषेण श्रीवत्सकृतलक्षणम् ।
आसीनं तं नरव्याघ्र पश्याम्यमिततेजसम् ॥
ततो मामब्रवीद्बालः स प्रीतः प्रहसन्निव ।.....
अपीदानीं शरीरेस्मिन्मामके मुनिसत्तम ।
उषितस्त्वं सुविश्रान्तो मार्कण्डेय ब्रवीहि मे ॥
तस्य ताम्रतलौ तात चरणौ सुप्रतिष्ठितौ ।
प्रयत्नेन मया मूर्ध्ना गृहीत्वा ह्यभिवन्दितौ ॥.....
ज्ञातुमिच्छामि देव त्वां मायां चैतां तवोत्तमाम् ॥
इह भूत्वा शिशुः साक्षात्किं भवानवतिष्ठते ।
पीत्वा जगदिदं सर्वमेतदाख्यातुमर्हसि ॥
इत्युक्तः स मया श्रीमान्देवदेवो महाद्युतिः ।
सान्त्वयन्मामिदं वाक्यमुवाच वदतां वरः ॥
कामं देवा अपि न मां विप्रा जानन्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्वत्प्रीत्या तु प्रवक्ष्यामि यथेदं विसृजाम्यहम् ॥
पितृभक्तोऽसि विप्रर्षे मा चैव शरणं गतः ।
ततो दृष्टोऽस्मि ते साक्षाद्ब्रह्मचर्यं च ते महत् ॥
अपा नारा इति पुरा संज्ञाकर्म कृतं मया ।
तेन नारायणोऽप्युक्तो मम तत्त्वयनं सदा ॥
अहं नारायणो नाम प्रभवः शाश्वतोऽव्ययः ।
विधाता सर्वभूतानां संहर्ता च द्विजोत्तम ॥
अहं विष्णुरहं ब्रह्मा शक्रश्चाह सुराधिपः ।
अहं वैश्रवणो राजा यमः प्रेताधिपस्तथा ॥

अहं शिवश्च सोमश्च कश्यपोऽथ प्रजापतिः ।
अहं धाता विधाता च यज्ञश्चाहं द्विजोत्तम ॥
अग्निरास्यं क्षितिः पादौ चन्द्रादित्यौ च लोचने ।
द्यौर्मूर्धा खं दिशः श्रोत्रे तथापः स्वेदसम्भवाः ॥
सदिशं च नभः कायो वायुर्मनसि मे स्थितः ।
मया क्रतुशतैरिष्टं बहुभिः स्वाप्तदक्षिणैः ॥
यजन्ते वेदविदुषो मा देवयजने स्थितम् ।
पृथिव्यां क्षत्रियेन्द्राश्च पार्थिवाः स्वर्गकांक्षिणः ॥.....
शेषो भूत्वाहमेवैता धारयामि वसुन्धराम् ।
वाराहं रूपमास्थाय मयेयं जगती पुरा ॥.....
अग्निश्च वडवावक्त्रो भूत्वाहं द्विजसत्तम ।.....
ब्रह्म वक्त्र भुजौ क्षत्रमूरू मे संस्थिता विशः ॥
पादौ शूद्रा भवन्तीमे विक्रमेण क्रमेण च ।
ऋग्वेदः सामवेदश्च यजुर्वेदोऽप्यथर्वणः ॥
मत्तः प्रादुर्भवन्त्येते मामेव प्रविशन्ति च ।
यतयः शान्तिपरमा यतात्मानो बुभुत्सवः ॥
कामक्रोधद्वेषमुक्ता निःसङ्गा वीतकल्मषाः ।
सत्त्वस्था निरहङ्कारा नित्यमध्यात्मकोविदाः ॥
मामेव सतत विप्राश्चिन्तयन्त उपासते ।
अहं संवर्तको वाह्निरहं संवर्तकोऽनलः ॥
अहं संवर्तकः सूर्यस्त्वहं संवर्तकोऽनिलः ।
तारारूपाणि दृश्यन्ते यान्येतानि नभःस्थले ॥
रत्नाकरः समुद्रश्च सर्व एव चतुर्दिशम् ॥
वसनं शयनं चैव विलयं चैव विद्धि मे ।
मयैव सुविभक्तस्ते देवकार्यार्थसिद्धये ॥.....
यदा यदा च धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति सत्तम ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥.....
यावद्युगानां विप्रर्षे सहस्रपरिवर्तनात् ॥
तावत्स्वपिमि विश्वात्मा सर्वभूतानि मोहयन् ।
एवं सर्वमहं कालमिहास्से मुनिसत्तम ॥
अशिशुः शिशुरूपेण यावद्ब्रह्मा न बुध्यते ।
मया च दत्तो विप्राग्र्य वरस्ते ब्रह्मरूपिणा ॥
असकृत्परितुष्टेन विप्रर्षिगुणपूजित ।.....
विक्लवोऽसि मया जातस्ततस्ते दर्शितं जगत् ।
अभ्यन्तरं शरीरस्य प्रविष्टोऽसि यदा मम ॥
इत्युक्त्वान्तर्हितस्तात स देवः परमाद्भुतः ।
एवं दृष्टं मया राजँस्तस्मिन्प्राप्ते युगक्षये ॥
आश्चर्यं भरतश्रेष्ठ सर्वधर्मभृतां वर ।

अस्यैव वरदानाद्धि स्मृतिर्न प्रजहाति माम् ।
दीर्घमायुश्च कौन्तेय स्वच्छन्दमरणं मम ।।
स एष कृष्णो वार्ष्णेयः पुराणपुरुषो विभुः ।
गच्छध्वमेनं शरणं शरण्यं कौरवर्षभ ।।

Mahābhārata 3,185,14-143; 189,1-5-7

This is one of the finest images of a peculiar Viśvarūpa of Vishṇu as the child on the banyan leaf sucking his toe holding one of his feet with his two hands, a favourite theme in painting of various schools like Kāngrā, Basohli and so forth (Fig 84). Mārkaṇḍeya represents the oldest seers and age itself in its fullness, and the child connotes the juvenile spirit of the child just born and enjoying life with great zest, on this magical universal leaf from the banyan tree which is symbolic of the spread of the coolness of the shade as divine protection to ward off the heat of all mundane sorrows.

The power of penance of the *ṛishis* is itself a great glory. The *tapovana* of the *ṛishi* is a place similar to where the deer is free to roam about. Such a spot like Mṛigadāva at Sārnāth is considered fit for sacrifice. Manu has categorically stated that where the black antelope could roam peacefully, without fear, it is fit ground for sacrifice:

कृष्णसारस्तु चरति मृगो यत्र स्वभावतः ।
स ज्ञेयो यज्ञियो देशो म्लेच्छदेशस्ततः परः ।।

Manusmṛiti 2, 23.

Dushyanta as he enters the *tapovana* with drawn bow, in his swift chariot, is stopped by a *Ṛishikumāra*, who warns him not to shoot the innocent deer of the hermitage (Fig. 85):

राजन्! आश्रममृगोऽयं न हन्तव्यो न हन्तव्यः ।

Athijñānaśākuntalam 1.

An arrow in the tender body of the deer is like fire in a heap of soft cotton wool (Fig. 86):

न खलु न खलु वाणः संनिपात्योयमस्मिन्
मृदुनि मृगशरीरे तूलराशाविवाग्निः ।
क्व बत हरिणकानां जीवितं चातिलोलं
क्व च निशितनिपाता वज्रसाराः शरास्ते ।।

Athijñānaśākuntalam 1, 10.

How else could he think of the deer when he was only accustomed to the sight of the pets lying across the doorway of the hermitage munching the *nīvāra* corn dried in the courtyard, to a share of which they were entitled:

आकीर्णमृषिपत्नीनामुटजद्वाररोधिभिः ।
अपत्यैरिव नीवारभागधेयोचितैर्मृगैः

Raghuvaṁśa 1, 50.

The tender hearts of the *Ṛishis,* who would not mind the *Kuśa* grass, specially secured by them for their ritual being nibbled by deer, and who would even allow the new-born little ones shed their navel cord as they nestled in their laps:

क्रियानिमित्तेष्वपि वत्सलत्वादभग्नकामा मुनिभिः कुशेषु ।
तदंकशय्याच्युतनाभिनाला कच्चिन्मृगीणामनघा प्रसूतिः ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5, 8.

is only matched by the tenderness of the *Ṛishikanyās,* the hermit girls, that would immediately withdraw from the plants and trees after watering them so that the birds could drink water unafraid from the water channels around the roots:

सेकान्ते मुनिकन्याभिस्तत्क्षणोज्झितवृक्षकम् ।
विश्वासाय विहंगानामालवालाम्बुपायिनाम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1, 51.

A typical example of this is Śakuntalā, the innocent maiden of the hermitage, who not only knew how to love the animals and birds but also the very plants in the penance grove. Though, like those of her kind, she was very fond of adorning herself, she would not, because of her intense affection for the trees, gather even a sprout for her personal use, but would beam with pleasure at the very first appearance of flowers on the tree:

पातुं न प्रथमं व्यवस्यति जलं युष्मास्वपीतेषु या
नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनापि भवता स्नेहेन या पल्लवम् ।
आद्ये वः कुसुमप्रसूतिसमये यस्या भवत्युत्सवः
सेयं याति शकुन्तला पतिगृहं सर्वैरनुज्ञायताम् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4, 9.

In such an atmosphere of love even the immobile *sthāvaras,* like plants and trees, reciprocate love, and it is no wonder that the

Vanadevatās, with their hands peeping from the branches (Fig. 87), showered jewels and costly silks on Śakuntalā as presents, to adorn herself, as she set out for her husband's home:

क्षौमं केन चिदिन्दुकान्ति तरुणा मङ्गल्यमाविष्कृतं
निष्ठ्यूतश्चरणोपभोगसुलभो लाक्षारसः केनचित् ।
अन्येभ्यो वनदेवताकरतलैरापर्वभागोत्थितै-
र्दत्तान्याभरणानि तत्किसलयोद्भेदप्रतिद्वन्द्विभिः ॥

Abhijñāśākuntalam 4.

This is clearly depicted in sculpture in a whole length of *Kalpavallī* creeper running all along the coping of the Bhārhut railing with jewels, flowers, silk, etc. as being offerings as well as in the graphic representation of trees with the hands of the Vanadevatās peeping from between the branches with offerings of water and food eagerly received by grateful guests.

In this picture of the *tapovana* and the *āśrama*, where peace pervaded everywhere, there could be no scope for anything that was contrary to love and amity. The question of the powerful or ferocious and weak or mild could not arise amongst animals or birds. Rightly in such an atmosphere Kālidāsa could say:

ऊनं न सत्त्वेष्वधिको बबाधे तस्मिन्वनं गोप्तरि गाहमाने ।

Raghuvaṁśa 2, 14.

In the *āśrama* of Upamanyu Vaiyāghrapāda, the son of Vyāghrapāda, visited by Kṛishṇa, a striking spectacle noticed was the play of the mongoose with the snake as a friend and tigers and lions lovingly sporting with the deer. Here was *maitrī*, surge of natural friendliness, in an atmosphere of great love and affection. The affection of the hermits had the great quality of *maitrī* in such abundance that their hermitage was indeed beautiful not only in appearance but sweet in its atmosphere as well, with a variety of birds and animals including the tiger and other ferocious ones so transformed in consonance with the *ṛishis* who were the very embodiment of the knowledge of *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*:

क्रीडन्ति सर्पैर्नकुला मृगैर्व्याघ्राश्च मित्रवत् ।
प्रभावाद्दीप्ततपसः संनिकृष्टगुणान्विताः ॥

तत्राश्रमपदे श्रेष्ठे सर्वभूतमनोहरे।
सेविते द्विजशार्दूलैर्वेदवेदाङ्गपारगैः॥

Mahāvīracharita 13, 14, 42-43.

Kshemendra describes a similar coming together of inmical animals and birds in the loving atmosphere of the *āśrama* of Agastya.

When Rāma approaches the hermitage of Agastya, there is an atmosphere of peace and serenity, of holiness, of utmost friendliness towards one and all, radiating as it were from all the sages and Agastya principally, that makes even the trees and plants in the area, not to talk of the animals and birds, emulate their virtues. Rāma remarks that his heart leaps up in joy to behold this rare spectacle. The trees, with the swarms of bees on their tender leaves like rosaries of beads in the fingers, wearing a garment of bark as it were, the twigs serving as holy twigs, are almost sages so transformed. The natural inveterate enmity between the lion and the elephant is set at rest as also that of the snake and the peacock. They are completely transformed from their *tāmasik* attitude into a subtle *sātvik* mood, nay, a step further advanced, they exchange friendly looks and offer an abundance of love and affection mutually:

भृङ्गाक्षमालावलयव्यग्रपल्लवपाणयः।
पलाशिनो वल्कलिनो भान्त्येते मुनयो यथा॥
प्रशान्तवैररजसं सिंहेभफणिबर्हिणम्।
प्रेमप्रणयिनी चेष्टा निर्विकारैव दृश्यते॥
शीलवृत्तिः शमेनेव दानेनेव दयालुता।
मुनिना दक्षिणेयं दिग्विभाति द्यौरिवेन्दुना॥

Rāmāyaṇamañjarī 3, 464-448.

Like the sky beautified by the moon, character and bearing is beautified by the control of senses, and the quality of mercy and intense feeling for suffering by sacrifice and the desire to give away. Animals, birds and reptiles in sculpture or painting are shown as opposites come together, wherever the attitude of universal love of a sage is sought to be illustrated.

Aśvaghosha describes the peace reigning supreme in the surrondings of the hermitage of sage Kapila where even wild beasts so ferocious moved peacefully with the innocent deer as if taught humility and love by the sages there who were their common refuge:

अपि क्षुद्रमृगा यत्र शान्ताश्चेरुः समं मृगैः ।
शरण्येभ्यस्तपस्विभ्यो विनयं शिक्षिता इव ॥

Saundarananda 1, 12.

An early Śuṅga sculpture from Mathurā shows a *ṛishi* almost in friendly conversation with birds, snakes and deer (Fig. 88).

In the panel from Deogarh representing Naranārāyaṇa (Fig. 20), where Vishṇu in the guise of a sage, is expounding the highest truth, the atmosphere of the *tapovana* is vividly presented by the snake, the deadliest receptacle of venom, in the vicinity of the innocent and harmless pair of deer, and also by the tiger, with its terrible teeth, ordinarily a great source of fear, but here unable to exite it. This same idea is also repeated in later sculpture, as for instance in the case of Śiva as a teacher for the sages themselves, seated under the large spreading banyan tree as Dakshiṇāmūrti. The representation of Dakshiṇāmūrti from Kāverīpākkam showing the innocent deer and venomous serpent together (Fig. 89), like the deer and the tiger together, and cat surrounded by mice (Fig. 90) in Arjuna's penance at Mahābalipuram, is all more or less a glorification of the *prabhāva* of *tapas* or penance. It is by *tapas* that Arjuna got his *Pāśupata* weapon. It is by penance that Bhagīratha brought down the Ganges, the heavenly river. It is by penance that Bhṛigu, the son of Varuṇa, realised the truth of the Absolute. It is by penance that Viśvāmitra attained the impossible, became a *Brahmaṛishi*, and rightly as Bhavabhūti says:

वसिष्ठ :— सत्यमीदृशो विश्वामित्रः ।
यद्वाचां विषयमतीत्य चेतसां वा
पर्यायात्परमतिशायनस्य वा यत् ।
ब्रह्मर्षी तदिह दुरासदे समिद्धं
तेजोभिर्ज्वलति महत्त्वमप्रमेयम् ॥

Mahāvīracharita 4, 15.

In Bhārhut there is a sculpture of an ascetic seated in the company of animals. It is the Bodhisattva in the *Bhaisa Jātaka,* (Fig 91) who, though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, had given up all his wealth and treasures for a life of renunciation in a hermitage on the Himālaya with his sister, and so impressed even the animals by his simple life, that an elephant and a monkey also joined him to live a similar life. When Śakra, just to test him, stole the share of lotus

fibres intended for the meal of the Bodhisattva, even the animals joined the Bodhisattva's sister in taking an oath to vindicate their innocence in regard to the disappearance of the fibres, till finally Śakra revealed himself to apologise and explained to the Bodhisattva that he was only testing him. Such high notions of personal conduct in an animal like a monkey, normally ever so fickle and ready for mischief, only reflects the high potency of the atmosphere of virtue in a hermitage of true ascetics, who have completely obliterated passion and desire for things and live abstemiously. The sculpture graphically represents the emphasis on this aspect of saintly life and its influence. It also has to be brought in the context of *satya* or truth worshipped as the Almighty by Satyavachā son of Rathītara. This story of the oath taken by each denying the stealing of the fibres is all from the *Mahābhārata* from the *Anuśāsanaparva*. Kshemendra has given a beautiful epitome of this styled *bisastainya* or the stealing of the fibres in his *Bhāratamañjarī*. It is here the seven *ṛishis* and Arundhatī who, at a time when there was a severe drought for years, famished and hungry without food for ever so long, were offered wealth to acquire food by king Vṛishadarbhi, but, as the *ṛishis* considered *pratigraha* or receiving a gift from a king as detrimental to their power of penance and against the principle of *tapasyā*, preferred to go hungry. The king arranged for golden fruit to be thrown in their way hoping they would collect at least these. But the sages who had no such desires, would not touch them. Śakra himself appeared as a fat and sleek young ascetic called Śunaḥsakha and joined their company. The king, angry with the sages for their so rejecting every effort of his to help them in that period of drought, created a demon to look after a lotus lake full of lotuses. The *ṛishis* when they sighted the lake, wanted to feed themselves on lotus fibres, but, the demon would not allow them to enter the lake till he knew who they were. Each one individually introduced himself and Arundhatī as well. When the demon asked a second time the name of Śunahsakha, the sages got enraged, and reduced him to ashes. They collected enough lotus fibres for all of them, laid them on the bank to partake of them after their bath and ablutions, but what was their surprise when they reached the bank and found the fibres missing! When a thing badly needed is lost, even the most beloved and intimate have suspicions among themselves, and each one took an oath by trying to utter imprecations

regarding whoever stole the fibres. Śunahsakha, however, made a strange statement that whosoever had stolen the fibres should give a very beautiful girl to an immaculate *brahmachārī*, a sacrificer of great lustre and repository of the *Veda*. The *ṛishis* at once said it was a wish of his own and fixed the theft of the fibres on him, which he readily accepted with a smile, assuring them that he wanted to save the *ṛishis* from accepting what they would not even in dire starvation, if they knew that the demon who watched the lake was created by Vṛishadarbhi to thwart them. He had reduced him to ashes and removed the lotus stalks. He revealed himself as Indra, and in the aerial car that arrived, he took them all to heaven:

ततः शशिकराकाराः समुद्धृत्य मृणालिकाः ।
तीरे निक्षिप्य मुनयः स्नात्वा चक्रुर्जलक्रियाम् ॥
अथोत्थाय विसाहारसादरास्ते श्रमाकुलाः ।
विसानि तानि नापश्यन्न्यस्तानि नालिनीतटे ॥
परस्परं शंकिताश्च चक्रिरे शपथं क्रमात् ।
सहसाभिमतोच्छेदो महतामपि दुसहः ॥.....
परदाराभिगामी च गरदः सोमविक्रयी ।
पिशुनश्चास्त्वसौ येन हृतं नो विसभोजनम् ॥
इत्युक्ते मुनिभिः पश्चात्तानुवाच शुनःसखः ।
याजिने छन्दसां धाम्ने शुद्धाय ब्रह्मचारिणे ॥
देयात्स कन्यकां येन हृतान्यत्र विसानि नः ।
श्रुत्वैतदूचुर्मुनयः त्वया भाषितमीप्सितम् ॥
त्वयैव हृतमस्माकं सर्वथा विसभोजनम् ।
इति तेषु ब्रुवाणेषु हसन् प्राप शुनःसखः ॥
मयैवेह विसस्तैन्यं कृतं वो हितकारिणा ।
सा च कृत्या हता घोरा देवोऽहं त्रिदशेश्वरः ॥
इत्युक्त्वा निजमास्थाय रूपं सप्तर्षिभिः सह ।
वेल्लद्विमानमालांकं नाकं नाकपतिर्ययौ ॥
प्रतिग्रहनिवृत्तानामेवमुज्ज्वलचेतसाम् ।
विभात्यलौल्याभरणवृत्तिः संतोषशालिनाम् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13, 1605-1615.

The description of the trees of the *āśrama* welcoming guests in their own way acting like *ṛishis* is graphically described by Harshadeva. Jīmūtavāhana is all praise for the peace of the penance grove where the difficult Vedic texts were discussed by sages who were the very embodiment of contentment, that cut green *samidh* twigs while

reciting Vedic hymns to memorise them, even as the young hermit maidens filled the channels at the roots of the plants with water from the adjoining streams. The trees thus appeared to address sweet words of welcome to the guests through the humming of their bees, offer salutation with their heads bent under the weight of their fruit which also served as offerings, and by scattered flowers as if they were offering worshipful *arghya* to the visitors to the hermitage. He wonders whether the trees had been taught the proper mode of reception of guests by the atmosphere of the *ṛishis*:

> अहो नु खलु मुदितमुनिजनप्रविचार्यमानसंदिग्धवेदवाक्यविस्तरस्य पठद्भटुजन-
> च्छिद्यमानार्द्रसमिधः तापसकुमारिकापूर्यमानवालवृक्षकालवालस्य प्रशान्तरम्यता
> तपोवनस्य । इह हि
> मधुरमिव वदन्ति स्वागतं भृङ्गशब्दै-
> र्नतिमिव फलनम्रैः कुर्वतेऽमी शिरोभिः ।
> मम ददत इवार्घ्यं पुष्पवृष्टीः किरन्तः
> कथमतिथिसपर्या शिक्षिताः शाखिनोऽपि ॥
>
> *Nāgānanda* 1, 12.

This is not a wonder as the trees reciprocate the love and affection of the *ṛishis* themselves. The very appearance of the trees and the atmosphere around indicates this. The barks of the trees for preparing their clothes have been cut by the sages with utmost compassion, the larger and the tough parts being left out in their kindness, the water from the cascades is pure like the sky though here and there there are a few broken old water-pots of gourd, scattered here and there by the hermit boys are their tattered waist zones of plaited *Kuśa* grass, even the parrots on the trees here repeat exactly the *Sāma* hymns by constant listening to the utterance of the hermits' intonation of the *Veda*:

> वासोऽर्थं दययैव नातिपृथवः कृत्तास्तरूणां त्वचः
> भग्नालक्ष्यजरत्कमण्डलु नभःस्वच्छं पयो नैर्झरम् ।
> दृश्यन्ते त्रुटितोज्झिता च बहुभिर्मैन्ज्यः क्वचिन्मेखला
> नित्याकर्णनया शुकेन च पदं साम्नामिदं पठ्यते ॥
>
> *Nāgānanda* 1, 11.

Even *Vanadevatās* in the forest are influenced by the attitude of the sages, their universal love and affection, their heartfelt welcome to the guests, and in every way follow their example. The female

ascetic Ātreyī is astonished to find that as she enters the colony of sages presided over by Agastya, *Vanadevatās*, even from a distance, welcome her with an offering of *arghya* of tender shoots, fruits and flowers, flowers are scattered in adoration and the utterance is so sweet. Enjoy here this penance grove to your heart's desire. This is indeed a happy day for me. The meeting of the good with those ever so good, a rare occurrence, is only by the power of great merit. Here is the cool shade of the trees, sweet water and food appropriate for hermits, fruit or roots whatever. Everything here is entirely yours and for any of this you depend on none:

अये वनदेवतेयं फलकुसुमगर्भेण पल्लवार्घ्येण दूरान्मामुपतिष्ठते
यथेच्छं भोग्यं वो वनमिदमयं मे सुदिवसः
सतां सद्भिः सङ्गः कथमपि हि पुण्येन भवति ।
तरुच्छाया तोयं यदपि तपसो योग्यमशनं
फलं वा मूलं वा तदपि न पराधीनमिह वः ॥

Uttararāmacharita 2, 1.

The *Vanadevatā* continues. The attitude is one of love; restraint in speech, is ever so sweet, ever so modest; the mind by nature is so auspiciously good and this friendship so blameless; the flavour of this is unaltered from the beginning to the end. This is the secret of the guileless attitude of the good:

प्रियप्राया वृत्तिर्विनयमधुरो वाचि नियमः
प्रकृत्या कल्याणी मतिरनवगीतः परिचयः ।
पुरो वा पश्चाद्वा तदिदमविपर्यासितरसं
रहस्यं साधूनामनुपधि विशुद्धं विजयते ॥

Uttararāmacharita 2, 2.

The *ṛishis* endowed with such simplicity, kindness, grace and super-celestial power were far beyond the celestials themselves. They were no doubt devout, and a whole row of *ṛishis* starting with Bhṛigu are described by Kālidāsa as waiting in attendance to enquire of Vishṇu whether he had had a good sublime slumber *yoganidrā*, for four months on his serpent couch; and the Lord in his turn graces them with his eyes so bright and purifying (Fig. 92):

योगनिद्रान्तविशदैः पावनैरवलोकनैः ।
भृग्वादीननुगृह्णन्तं सौखशायनिकान्मुनीन् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa 10, 14.

But it should not be forgotten that Bhrighu is the same *ṛishi* who to prove to the world the superior nature of Vishṇu in his infinite patience, grace and mercy, went one after the other to Brahmā, Śiva and Vishṇu, where the utmost disrespect, kicking on the chest, was shown in the case of Vishṇu who, *instead of getting ruffled enquired kindly* of the *ṛishi* whether his hard chest had hurt his tender foot:

पादौ ते कोमलौ दिव्यौ मच्छरीरसमागमात् ।
कियद्दुःखं समापन्नौ न जानामि द्विजोत्तम ॥

This so touched Bhrighu that he at once declared Vishṇu as the supreme in the trinity.

The *ṛishis* were so great that the celestials themselves chose to be born of them. Kaśyapa is the classical instance of a *ṛishi* from whom so many celestials were born through Aditi. The couple, Kaśyapa and Aditi, the father and mother of the gods, is graphically described by Kālidāsa through the mouth of Dushyanta. This is the cause as described by the great sages themselves of the twelvefold lustre in which Sūrya manifests himself (*dvādaśa ādityas*), of the lord of the three worlds who enjoys the highest of the offerings in sacrifices as Indra, and of which even the self-born Paramapurusha or Parmātmā himself thought of taking birth, it is this same Aditi and Kaśyapa, remote from Brahmā only by one generation, namely, Daksha and Marīchi:

प्राहुर्द्वादशधा स्थितस्य मुनयो यत्तेजसः कारणम्
भर्तारं भुवनत्रयस्य सपुवे यद्यज्ञभागेश्वरम् ।
यस्मिन्नात्मभुवः परोऽपि पुरुषश्चक्रे भवस्यास्पदं
द्वन्द्वं दक्षमरीचिसंभवमिदं तत्स्रष्टुरेकान्तरम् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7, 27.

The Vedic story of how Mārtāṇḍa among the forms of Sūrya was left out by Aditi but again was born of her is significant. Sūrya, as Indra had put it to Bharadvāja, is the central important theme of the *Veda*, himself becoming the guru of Yājñavalkya for the exposition of *Śukla Yujarveda*, being also of the nature of *Trayīvidyā* i.e. the three *Vedas*, the three *guṇas* and the three *mūrtis*, Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva, is the son of Kaśyapa and Aditi. Indra is Kāśyapeya and Āditeya Upendra or Vāmana, one of the *avatāras* of Vishṇu, is the offspring

of the same couple. It is Vāmana who encompassed the entire universe as Trivikrama that overcame the might of Bali to restore Indra to power (Fig. 93).

Garuḍa, the one most powerful not only among birds but even among the celestials, who even on his birth almost mystified the gods that could not understand his power and lustre and at their request reduced his fierce lustre:

एवं स्तुतः सुपर्णस्तु देवैः सर्षिगणैस्तदा ।
तेजसः प्रतिसंहारमात्मनः स चकार ह ॥

Mahābhārata 1, 23, 27.

who could easily fight and rout even the Dikpālas and put to shame even Indra, who himself sought his friendship, and the blow of whose *Vajra* could just touch a feather of his wing,

ऋषेर्मानं करिष्यामि वज्रं यस्यास्थिसम्भवम् ।
एतत्पत्रं त्यजाम्येकम् .....

Mahābhārata 1, 33, 20-21.

who in his fight with Airāvata, as Kṛishṇa fought Indra for Pārijāta, could by a single pat fell unconscious the celestial elephant itself on the Raivataka mountain, who could carry the Maṇiparvata mountain itself (Fig. 94) and the Pārijāta tree like a small *tulasī* plant to Dwārakā, was the son of Kaśyapa by another of his consorts, Vinatā. Aruṇa, lustrous dawn, the precursor of Śurya, is also Vainateya through Kaśyapa.

The great Śesha who carries the entire world on his thousand hoods (Fig. 95), who is the very incarnation of might, endless as Ananta, signifying one of the greatest aspects of Paramātmā, along with other great Nāgas like Takshaka, was born of Kaśyapa through Kadrū, the whole reptile family being called through their mother Kādraveya. By *tapasyā* Śesha became at the request of Brahmā the great supporter of the world with all its mountains and forests, oceans, villages and cities:

इमां महीं शैलवनोपपन्नां ससागरग्रामविहारपत्तनाम् ।
त्वं शेष सम्यक् चलितं यथावत्संगृह्य तिष्ठस्व यथाचलः स्यात् ॥

Mahābhārata 1, 38, 19.

All the Devas are the children of Aditi, Ādityas or Aditinandanas.

The moon himself (Fig. 94), though born of the ocean, is also a *Ṛishikumāra* born of the eye of Atri:

अथ नयनसमुत्थं ज्योतिरत्रेरिव द्यौः

Raghuvaṁśa 2, 75.

Fig. 95. Śesha carries the world on his hoods: after an old traditional woodcut picture from Mahārāshṭra.

as Kālidāsa would put it. Mallinātha in explaining the verse of Kālidāsa quotes from the *Harivaṁśa.* From the eyes of Atri there were ten streams which brightened up the goddesses of the quarters who bore the foetus in ten parts with great joy. It was however a difficult task for them, and finally the moon in ten parts fell from them, lighting up the entire world with his divine radiance:

नेत्राभ्यां परिसुस्राव दशधा द्योतयन्दिशः।
तं गर्भं दशधा हृष्टा दिशो देव्यो दधुस्ततः॥

समेत्य धारयामासु र्न चैतास्तमशक्नुवन् ।
स ताभ्यः सहसैवाथ दिग्भ्यो गर्भः प्रभान्वितः ॥
पपात भावयँल्लोकाम्छीतांशुः सुरभावनः ।

Harivaṁśa

The Chandella kings whose full name is Chandrātreyas are so called, being of the lunar race, the moon being born of Atri and called Ātreya.

The detailed story is given in the *Harivaṁśa*. The revered sage Atri long ago performed severe penance for three thousand years by celestial reckoning with unwinking eyes and with complete self-control. His body not only lit up, but like the milky ocean, became completely ambrosial. From his eyes, there were ten streams of ambrosia that flowed into the ten quarters filling the sky with light. The damsels personifying the quarters bore this foetus with great difficulty till it became the luminous moon that occupied the sky. With this appearance of the moon, there was a quake in the entire universe. Brahmā in his Vedic chariot yoked to a thousand horses took him in it. The celestials and sages all honoured him with praise and prayed for his increase in light. Thus he was successful in winning over the entire universe. The moon himself performed penance for myriads of years, and by his lustre created the most potent medicinal herbs. Brahmā, made him the king of the *Brāhmaṇas* by a regular royal coronation. That is why the hemistich,

तस्मात्सोमराजानो ब्राह्मणाः

Taittirīya Saṁhitā

He became the beloved of the daughters of Daksha and shone in the Rāyasūya sacrifice:

अत्रिश्चचार भगवान्मौने मुनिवरः पुरा ।
तपो दश सहस्राणि दिव्यानि त्रीणि निश्चलः ॥
तस्याथ निर्निमेषस्य शरीरं ब्रह्मचारिणः ।
अभूद्दिव्यामृतमयं कान्तं दुग्धोदधेरिव ॥
ततः सुस्राव नेत्राभ्यामत्रेस्तद्दशधा स्रुतम् ।
अमृतं दिक्षु दशसु प्रभासंपूरिताम्बरम् ॥
वृतं दद्दशभिर्गर्भं दिग्भिर्यत्नेन दुःसहम् ।
सोमत्वमाप्तं सहसा पपात भुवि भास्वरम् ॥

तस्मिन्निपतिते तूर्णं कम्पिते भुवनत्रये ।
रथे वेदमये ब्रह्मा सहस्राश्वे समादधे ॥
तं रथस्थं मुनिवरा देवास्त्रैलोक्यभावनम् ।
तुष्टुवुस्तेजसो वृद्ध्यै सर्वजिद्येन सोऽभवत् ॥
वत्सराणां चकारासौ पूर्णं पद्मशतं तपः ।
उत्पन्नस्तेजसा तस्य दिग्यौषधिसुधागमः ॥
राजा राज्याभिषिक्तोऽथ ब्रह्मणा ब्राह्मणाधिपः ।
वल्लभो दक्षपुत्रीणां राजसूये रराज सः ॥

Bhāratamañjarī, *Harīvaṁśa* 182, 189.

In the *Vishṇupurāṇa*, there are three sons of Atri mentioned of Anasūyā, one is Soma or the moon, the next Durvāsa and the third Dattātreya:

अनसूया तथैवात्रेर्जज्ञे पुत्रानकल्मषान् ।
सोमं दुर्वाससं चैव दत्तात्रेयं च योगिनम् ॥

Vishṇupurāṇa 1, 10, 8-9.

In the *Kanakadhārāstotra*, Lakshmī is specifically called Bhārgavandanā by Śaṅkara (Fig 97). May the lovely form of the daughter of the sage Bhṛigu, the mother of the entire universe, that shines on the chest of the foe of Kaiṭabha, beautiful in its dark complexion like trailing clouds of glory, even as the golden streak of lightning on dark laden cumulus, confer on me every good:

कालाम्बुदालि ललितोरसि कैटभारे-
र्धाराधरे स्फुरति या तटिदङ्गनेव ।
मातुः समस्तजगतां महनीयमूर्ति-
र्भद्राणि मे दिशतु भार्गवनन्दनायाः ॥

Kanakadhārāstotra 6,95.

It is explained by Parāśara in the *Vishṇupurāṇa* how Lakshmī is the daughter of Bhṛigu. Originally she was born of Bhṛighu and later of the ocean through the effort of the Devas and the Asuras who churned the ocean for Amṛita:

भृगोः ख्यात्यां समुत्पन्ना श्रीः पुर्वमुदधेः पुनः ।
देवदानवयत्नेन प्रसूताऽमृतमन्थने ॥
एवं यथा जगत्स्वामी देवराजो जनार्दनः ।
अवतारं करोत्येष तथा श्रीस्तत्सहायिनी ॥

Vishṇupurāṇa 1, 9, 138-139.

Bhrigu through his wife Khyāti had a daughter Lakshmī, the consort of Vishṇu, and two sons Dhātā and Vidhātā. Āyati and Niyati the daughters of Meru were married to Dhātā and Vidhātā. Two sons Prāṇa and Mṛikaṇḍu were born to them. The son of sage Mṛikaṇḍu is Mārkaṇḍeya. He had also another son Vedaśirā. Prāṇa had two sons Dyutimān and Rājavān. This is the detailed description of Bhrigu's immediate family:

भृगोः ख्यात्यां समुत्पन्ना लक्ष्मीर्विष्णुपरिग्रहः ।
तथा धातृविधातारौ ख्यात्यां जातौ सुतौ भृगो : ॥
आयतिर्नियतिश्चैव मेरोः कन्ये महात्मनः ।
भार्ये धातृविधात्रोस्ते तयोर्जातौ सुतावुभौ ॥
प्राणश्चैव मृकण्डुश्च मार्कण्डेयो मृकण्डुतः ।
ततो वेदशिरा जज्ञे प्राणस्यापि सुतं शृणु ॥
प्राणस्य द्युतिमान्पुत्रो राजवांश्च ततोऽभवत् ।

Vishṇupurāṇa 1, 10, 2-5.

It is interesting that at Uttiramerur there is a temple of the eighth-ninth century A.D. built by the Pallava king Dantivarman with a fine *vimāna* known as *ashṭāṅgavimāna* containing some very beautiful and rather unusual iconographic forms as large decorative panels. There is a Sarasvatī that would be normally taken to be Gajalakshmī, as she is bathed by elephants. While it is a bath of fortune and prosperity for Śrī, it is a bath of wisdom by elephants symbolic of wisdom also. Another and, for our purpose more important, is Bhṛigu the great sage who is among the greatest devotees of Vishṇu as well as the father of Śrī or Lakshmī in one of her *avatāras* (Fig 98) earlier than when she was born out of the milky ocean *kshīrasāgara*, when the ocean became her father. Bhrigu is among the sages receiving the grace of Vishṇu as he rises from his *yoganidrā* as earlier noted. An inscription here is of special interest as pointed out by Ganapati Sthapati as it helps to understand the full import of the construction of the temple itself by the architect Parameśvara of the village Pataka with the aid of those in the village learned in the text of the *Āgamas* and its practice. The inscription helps us to understand the text of *Marīchi Saṁhitā* which details the design of the *vimāna* which is fully answered in this well-designed and executed temple.

Kapila the great sage was born of Kardama and Devahūti.

The story is given in the *Bhāgavata* and *Harivaṁśa*. Kardama, himself one of the lords of creation, *Prajāpati*, born of Brahmā, performed severe austerities for thousands of years on the banks of the river Sarasvatī. His consort Devahūti, the daughter of the emperor Manu and Śatarūpā, by devout worship of the Lord as directed by her husband had the good fortune to have the Lord himself born to her as Kapila to propagate the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy:

निजभर्तृगिरा भवन्निषेवानिरतायामथ देव देवहूत्याम् ।
कपिलस्त्वमजायथा जनानां प्रथयिष्यन् परमात्मतत्त्वविद्याम् ॥

Nārāyaṇīyam 14, 9.

In the *Nārāyaṇīyam*, a fifteenth century abridgement of the *Bhāgavata* in *kāvya* form by Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭapāda of Kerala, the tenets of Sāṅkhya are explained in the simplest form in ten verses through the mouth of sage Kapila to his mother Devahūti. *Prakṛiti* (the illusory world around), *ahaṁkāra* (ego), five *tanmātras* (subtle elements like form, taste, sound, smell and touch), five *bhūtas* (the major elements earth, water, light, wind and sky), *hṛit* (mind), ten *indriyas* (sensory organs) and *Purusha* (the Primal), these twentyfive *tattvas* or aspects analysed and properly understood lead to liberation from the veil of *Prakṛiti*.

प्रकृतिमहदहंकाराश्च मात्राश्च भूता-
न्यपि हृदपि दशाक्षी पूरुषः पञ्चविंशः ।
इति विदितविभागो मुच्यते ऽसौ प्रकृत्या
कपिलतनुरिति त्वं देवहूत्यै न्यगादीः ॥

Nārāyaṇīyam 15, 2.

The refrain of the ten verses summarizing Kapila's philosophy to his mother runs, *kapilatanur iti tvam devehūtyai nyagādīḥ*, the poet Bhaṭṭapāda addressing Krishṇa himself.

After this Kapila took leave of his mother and left for performing penance. It is this preaching of Kapila to his mother that accounts for the Buddhist parallel of Buddha's ascent to heaven to teach his mother. It is while Kapila was doing penance in the nether world, when accidentally the horse stolen by Indra purposely left near the hermitage of this same sage, misled the princes, sons of Sagara, to rush in a body to attack him, that they were reduced to

ashes by the anger of Kapila. This story has been given in the *Vishṇu-purāṇa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa* as well as in the *Bhāgavata*. Indra warns Raghu not to follow the footsteps of Sagara's sons who were reduced to ashes by Kapila:

अतोयमश्वः कपिलातुकारिणा पितुस्त्वदीयस्य मयापहारितः।
अलं प्रयत्नेन तवात्र मा निधाः पदं पदव्यां सगरस्य संततेः॥

Raghuvaṁśa 3, 15.

There is a beautiful delineation in sculpture of the sons of Sagara attacking Kapila seated in meditation on a pillar from the Virūpāksha temple at Paṭṭaḍakal (Fig. 99) in the sequence of the story of Gaṅgā as Bhagīratha brings her down to the earth and the netherworld to purify the ashes of his ancestors and help them reach heaven. Probably the most magnificent representation of Kapila seated at ease in what is generally called the *mahārājalīlā* pose, with the horse beside him, is an early rock-cut one of great aesthetic eminence at Anurādhāpura in Ceylon (Fig. 6). In the Vaikuṇṭha form of Vishṇu, the most significant aspects of Vishṇu are represented by four heads (Fig. 100). The most important is the normal face of grace of Vishṇu which is the central facing one. To the proper right is the lionine face of Narasiṁha which is considered the most important *avatāra*. The porcine face to the left is the next in the order and to the back is Kapila's face with knit brow exhibiting anger:

सौम्यं तु वदनं पूर्वं नारसिंहं तु दक्षिणम्।
कापिलं पश्चिमं वक्त्रं तथा वाराहमुत्तरम्॥

Vishṇudharmottara 3, 44, 11-12

This is a favourite form in Kashmir and Nepal Among the forms of Vishṇu as a sage, Kapila, Naranārāyana, Rishabha and Vāmana are famous.

Aśvaghosha gives the greatness of sage Gautama from whose family he mentions Kapila as a worthy scion seer and then goes into ecstacies over the greatness of Kapila himself. Though Kapila is mentioned in the *Svetāśvataropanishad*, he is unknown to the *Ṛigveda*. Gotama who is prominenthy mentioned in the *Ṛigveda* and known as the father of Nodhas and Vāmadeva is the father of Śatānanda only in the *Rāmāyana*. Here are other descendants of his

like the Vājaśravases, Aruṇa, Uddālaka Āruṇi, Hāridrumata and others. So Kapila as of the line of Gautama given by Aśvaghosha is a version that differs from that of the *Bhāgavata* where he is the son of Prajāpati Kardama and Devahūtī. Aśvaghosha affirms Kapila as the teacher of Sāmkhya which Alāra Kālāma expounded to the young prince Siddhārtha turned a monk impressed by his brilliance:

इत्यराडः कुमारस्य माहात्म्यादेव चोदितः।
संक्षिप्तं कथयांचक्रे स्वस्य शास्त्रस्य निश्चयम् ॥

Buddhacharita 12, 15.

This is the reason for the Śākyas, Buddha included, styling themselves Gautamas after their *guru* Kapila's *gotra:*

तेषां मुनिरुपाध्यायो गौतमः कपिलोऽभवत्।
गुरुगोत्रादतः कौत्सास्ते भवन्ति स्म गौतमाः ॥

Saundarananda 1, 22.

And Kapila is eulogised as the best of the righteous ones, great in penance like another descendent of Gautama, Kakshīvān, whose incessent glory of penance blazed forth like the heat of the sun and attained its perfection by its steady progress, like Kaśyapa who milked the essence of the realisation of the self in the utterances of the *Veda*, like Vasishṭha amidst his disciples great in penance, who by his innate superiority was only next to the sage Dīrghatapas and a third in the category of intellectuals like Śukra and Bṛihaspati.

गौतमः कपिलो नाम मुनिर्धर्मभृतां वरः।
बभूव तपसि श्रान्तः कक्षीवानिव गौतमः ॥
अशिश्रियद्यः सततं दीप्तं काश्यपवत्तपः।
अशिश्रायच तद्वृद्धौ सिद्धिं काश्यपवत्पराम् ॥
हविःपु यश्च स्वात्मार्थं गामधुक्षद्वसिष्ठवत्।
तपःशिष्टेपु शिष्येपु गामधुक्षद्वसिष्ठवत् ॥
महात्म्याद्दीर्घतपसो यो द्वितीय इवाभवत्।
तृतीय इव यश्चाभूत्काव्याङ्गिरसयोर्धिया ॥

Saundarananda 1, 1-2.

Paraśurāma another great sage is the son of Jamadagni, born again in the Bhṛighu family. That the lord chose Jamadagni as his parent is not without reason. As a sage he was also of the highest order. It was a favourite hobby for him to shoot a target and his wife,

the princess Reṇukā, used to bring him back the arrows. Scorched by the rays of the sun at noon in this act, she suffered so much that Jamadagni enquired why she looked so exhausted, and took up his bow to punish the sun for tormenting her with his heat. The legend given in the *Mahābhārata* is interesting as Sūrya himself in the form of an old Brāhmaṇa is described to have come and advised Jamadagni to use the umbrella and sandals and not expect him to move away from *ṛita* or the order of the universe, as it was his nature to be hot. And that is the origin of the parasol and footwear.

Kubera one of the Dikpālas excited the wonder of the rākshasa Sumālī and his daughter Kaikasī who was accompanying her father. She looked as beautiful as Lakshmī herself though she was not lotus-born like the goddess. Noticing Kubera going in his aerial car to meet his father Paulastya, the great sage who was performing penance in his hermitage, and amazed at the grandeur of the lord of wealth and his good fortune to be born of so great a sage, Sūmālī pointed him out to his daughter, then in the bloom of her youth, and suggested that she should be given in wedlock to the same great *ṛishi* so that she could have children that could boast of the glory of Kubera. He suggested that she should be the spouse of Viśravas, son of sage Pulastya (Fig. 101-102):

तदपश्यत्स गच्छन्तं पुष्पकेन धनेश्वरम् ॥
गच्छन्तं पितरं द्रष्टुं पुलस्त्यतनयं विभुम् ।
तं दृष्ट्वामरेशसंकाशं स्वच्छन्दं तपनोपमम् ॥
इत्येव चिन्तयामास राक्षसानां महामतिः । .....
अथाब्रवीत्सुतां रक्षः कैकसी नाम नामतः ।
पुत्रि प्रदानकालोऽयं यौवनं ते ऽतिवर्तते ॥
प्रत्याख्यानाच्च भीतैस्त्वं न वरैश्च प्रतिगृह्यसे । .....
सा त्वं मुनिवरं श्रेष्ठं प्रजापतिकुलोद्भवम् ।
भज विश्रवसं पुत्रि पौलस्त्यं वरय स्वयम् ॥
ईदृशास्ते भविष्यन्ति पुत्राः पुत्रि न संशयः ।
तेजसा भास्करसमो यादृशोऽयं धनेश्वरः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 7, 9, 3-12.

Thus Kubera appeared the model of a grandson for Sumālī whose daughter he wanted to marry to that same *ṛishi* to have progeny that would equal Kubera. This very high status of Kubera, as not

only the lord of wealth and a Lokapāla but also as a friend of Śiva, is due to his origin from a very great *ṛishi* whom he was ever in the habit of every morning visiting in his simple hermitage for offering him his obeisance.

Mātaṅgī (Fig. 103), the goddess of music, four-armed, beautified by the crescent moon tucked on her braid, and crimson in colour like saffron, who plays the *vīṇā* with a rare melody, conversing at the same time softly with her sportive parrot perched on her shoulder, is the daughter of the sage Mataṅga. The daughter of sage Mataṅga plays the ruby-set lute, leisurely in her high state, sweet in her utterance of musical notes, azure like the blue sapphire (*indranīla*), her body delicate and limbs soft. Her description occurs in the first few verses of the *Śyāmalādaṇḍaka*:

माणिक्यवीणामुपलालयन्तीं मदालसां मञ्जुलवाग्विलासाम् ।
माहेन्द्रनीलद्युतिकोमलाङ्गीं मातङ्गकन्यां मनसा स्मरामि ॥ .....
जय मातङ्गतनये जय नीलोत्पलद्युते ।
जय सङ्गीतरसिके जय लीलाशुकप्रिये ॥

Śyamalādaṇḍaka 1, 4.

The river Kāverī is called Kaverakanyā, and is the daughter of the *ṛishi* Kavera. Similarly Godāvarī is called Gautamī because of her association with the sage Gautama. The Kauśikī river is the sister of Kauśika that is no other than the *Brahmaṛishi* Viśvāmitra. Gaṅgā herself is the daughter of the sage Jahnu having emerged from his ear after he had sipped her up when she was flooding his hermitage (Fig. 30). That is why Kālidāsa describes her as

जह्नोः कन्यां सगरतनयस्वर्गसोपानपङ्क्तिम्

Meghadūta 1,50.

She is not only the daughter of Jahnu but also the celestial ladder leading the sons of Sagara reduced to ashes by Kapila's anger to heaven itself.

Revā or Narmadā herself is the daughter of Soma, the moon who is himself the son of Atri, and thus is the granddaughter of one of the greatest sages. According to another account she is the daughter of a sage Mekala. Yamunā is similarly granddaughter of

Kaśyapa since she is the daughter of Sūrya and sister of Yama. Yama himself, son of Sūrya, is the grandson of Kaśyapa. Similarly the Aśvins. There are also instances of how some of the *ṛishis* were adopted by the celestials as their sons as for instance Aṅgiras who was adopted by Agni as his first son. Agni himself is more or less a *purohita*, a priest, is a sage, is shown sporting a beard and with attributes that would make him look a sage more than any other. It is he that officiates in all the marriages even of the highest celestials like, for instance, Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī, holding hands *pāṇigrahaṇa*, as bride and groom in wedlock as companions. He is the witness of the offering of parched rice (*lājahoma*) and the walking of seven steps together as companions in life (*saptapadī*) all in and around the flames and he is *śuchi* and *pāvaka*, so pure and purifying (Fig 104). The seven *ṛishis* themselves are aspects of Agni as seen in the *pūrṇāhuti mantra, sapta jihvāḥ,* the seven flames, *sapta ṛishayaḥ.* The *ṛishis* specially devoted themselves to the worship of the sun and the fire next to the worship of the abode of the *Veda*, Brahmā himself.

Urvaśī of great renown, the most beautiful, and surpassing all the celestial nymphs that were born of the milky ocean as it was churned, is a nymph of special importance in that she shamed the rest, herself born, as already referred, from the thigh of Nārāyaṇa, Vishṇu himself as the sage *par excellence* (Fig 20):

ऊरूद्भवा नरसखस्य मुनेः सुरस्त्री

Vikramorvaśīya 1, 4.

The *ṛishis* so great in every way had never any exaggerated notion of themselves. They had their own ideas of values and the instance is very clear in that of Chyavana the great *ṛishi* who had equated himself with a cow (Fig. 105) so far as his own value was concerned. The sage was performing severe penance in midstream under the waters of the river at the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. Around him frolicked innumerable fishes amidst which he stayed. The fishermen cast their net and had a rich and heavy haul. What was their surprise when they found the sage Chyavana in their haul of fishes: They were greatly perturbed, but the sage reassured them and not only excused them for what they thought was a great offence of theirs but also asked them to go and request the king of the realm

Nahusha, to give them his cost, as, being caught along with the fishes he was entitled to equal treatment with the fishes and was expected to fetch a price for the fishermen:

प्राणोत्सर्गं विसर्गं वा मत्स्यैर्यास्याम्यहं सह ।
समवासान्नोत्सहे त्यक्तुं सलिलेऽभ्युपितानहम् ॥

Mahābhārata 13, 50, 26-27.

The king hurried to the spot and offered first a thousand, ten thousand, then a million, a half of his kindom and finally in despair even his entire realm. But still the sage Chyavana shook his head and said it was not his price. The king was at his wit's end, when a wise sage counselled him to offer a cow as the value of the sage:

सर्वे विवर्णवदना नहुषाय न्यवेदयन् ।
... प्लवो भव महर्षे त्वं कुरु मूल्यविनिश्चयम् ॥
नहुषस्य वचः श्रुत्वा गविजातः प्रतापवान् ।
उवाच हर्षयन् सर्वानमात्यान्पर्थिवं च तम् ॥
ब्राह्मणानां गवां चैव कुलमेकं द्विधा कृतम् ।
एकत्र वेदास्तिष्ठन्ति हविरन्यत्र तिष्ठति ॥
अनर्घेयं महाराज द्विजो वर्णेषु चोत्तमः ।
गावश्च पुरुषव्याघ्र गौर्मूल्यं परिकल्प्यताम् ॥

Mahābhārata 13, 51, 20-22.

The king gladly offered a cow and Chyavana nodded his head in approval as that was the correcet value, a cow more than a kingdom:

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ विप्रर्षे गवा क्रीतोऽसि धर्मतः ।
एतं मूल्यमहं मन्ये तव धर्मभृतां वर ॥
उत्तिष्ठाम्येष राजेन्द्र सम्यक्क्रीतोऽस्मि तेऽनघ ।
गोभिस्तुल्यं न पश्यामि धनं किञ्चिदिहोच्यते ॥

Mahābhārata 13, 51, 25-26.

The sage Chyavana, a repository of the *Vedas* and the cow, a repository of *havis* for *yāga*, were equated, and the *ṛishi* evaluated himself in that simple manner. The *ṛishis* like the brimming vessel filled to the mouth were ambrosial treasures, most simple, existing only for the welfare of the world, deep and noble and never noisy like empty

drums, silently achieving the welfare of the world, nay, the universe by the glory of their *tapasyā*, ever praying for the well-being of the bipeds and quadrupeds.

शं नो अस्तु द्विपदे । शं चतुष्पदे । ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

and for their reckoning through their ears the good of the world, seeing with their eyes everything good:

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।

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PLATES

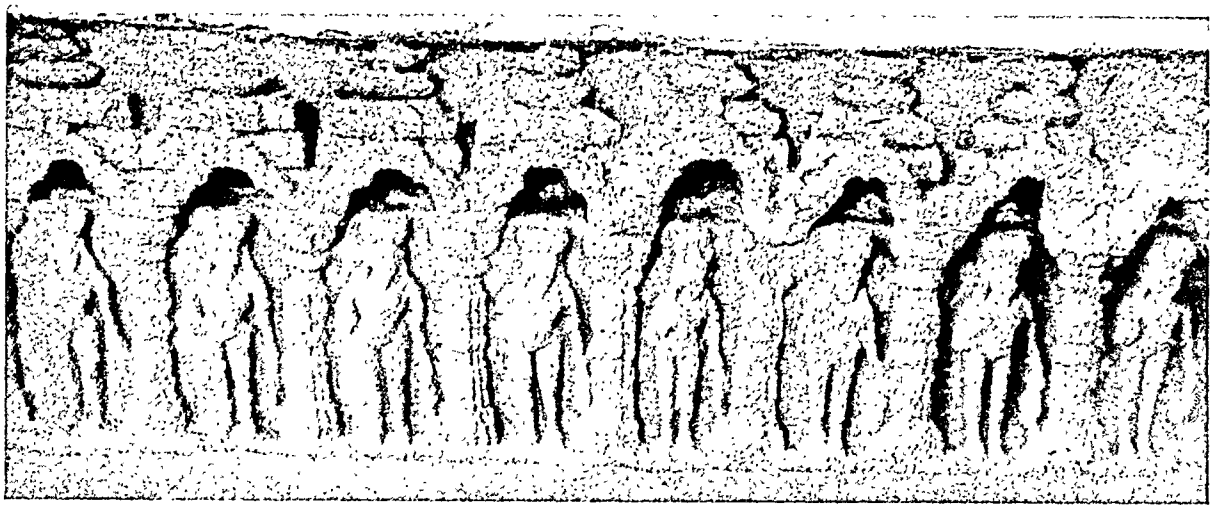

Fig. 1. *Saptaṛishis* and Arundhatī, Eastern Chāḷukya, 10th century A.D., Bhīmeśvara Temple, Drākshārāma.

Fig. 2. Atri and Anasūyā lovingly receiving Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Deogarh.

Fig. 3. Agni, with flames on the shoulders, Gupta, 4th century A.D., National Museum.

Fig. 4. Agni with flaming hair *jyotishkeśa*, Choḷa, 10th century A.D. Madras Museum

Fig. 5. Siddhārtha's miraculous birth. 9th century A.D., Deo Paṭān, Nepal.

Fig. 6. Sage Kapila, 5th century A.D., Isurumuniya Vihāra, Anurādhāpura, Śrī Laṅkā.

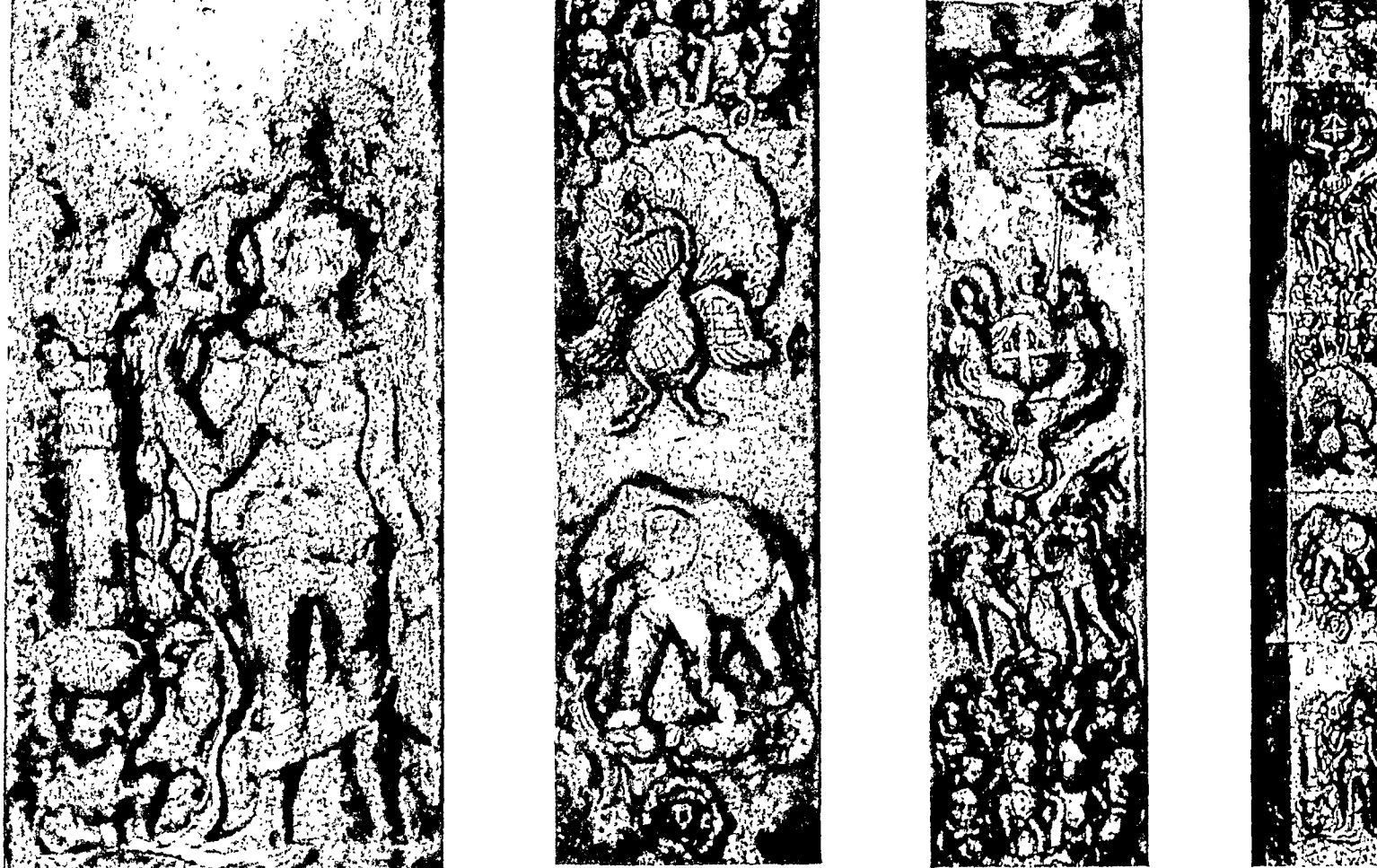

Fig. 7. Vālakhilyas preceding Sūrya's chariot, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Lālā Bhagat pillar.

Fig. 10. Buddha as Śākyamuni with dextral curl *jaṭā*, Kushāṇa, 1st century A.D., Katrā, Mathurā Museum.

Fig. 12. Brahmā on swans from Naṭarāja panel, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D., Elephaṇṭā.

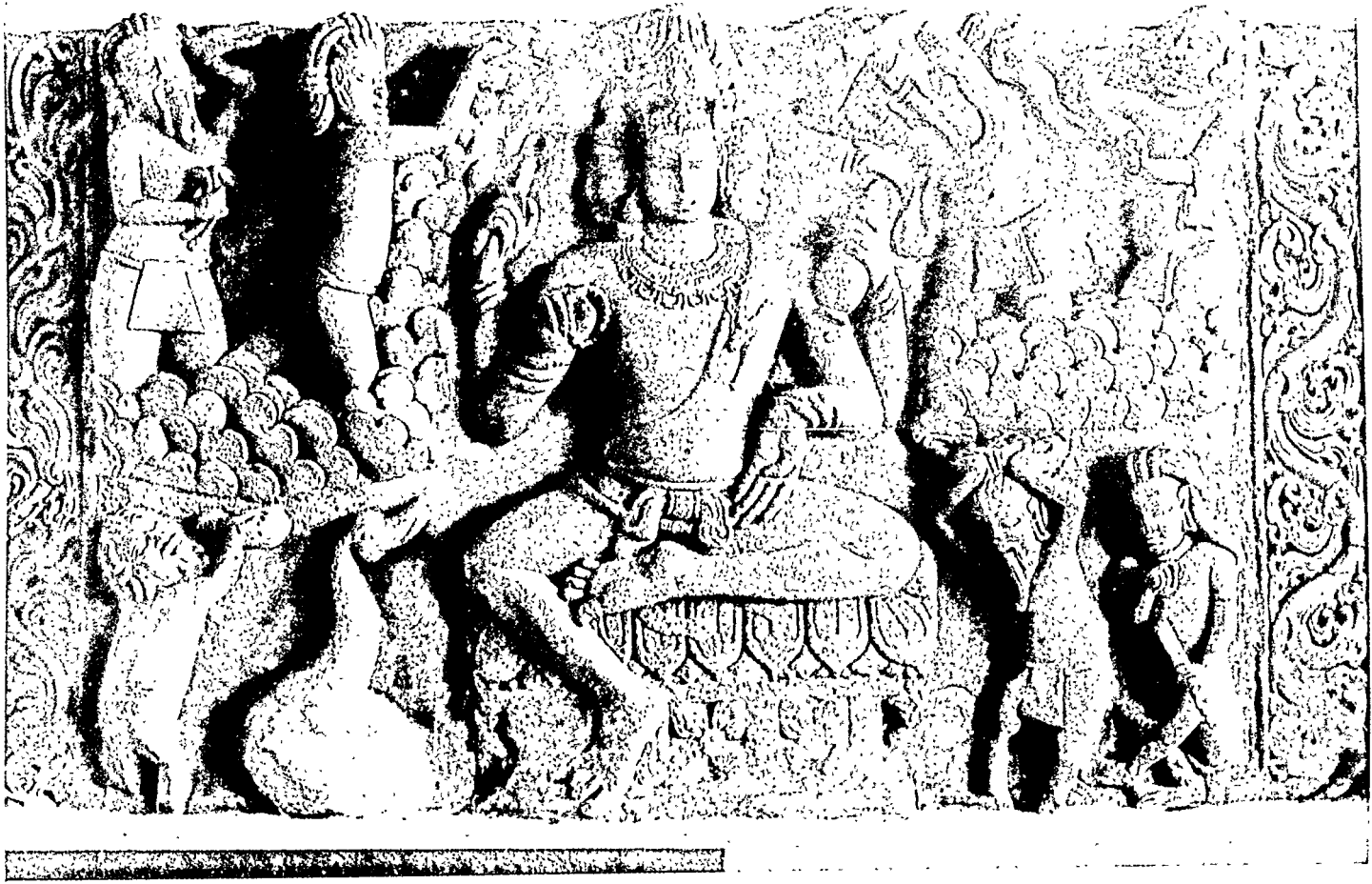

Fig. 13. Brahmā adored by *rishis*, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D., Aihoḷe, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

Fig. 16. *Tīrthya* Śiva, sages bathing Śiva, Gurjara Pratīhāra, 10th century A.D.

Fig. 17. Gaṅgādhara, Choḷa, 10th century A.D., Gaurī-māyūram Temple, Māyūram

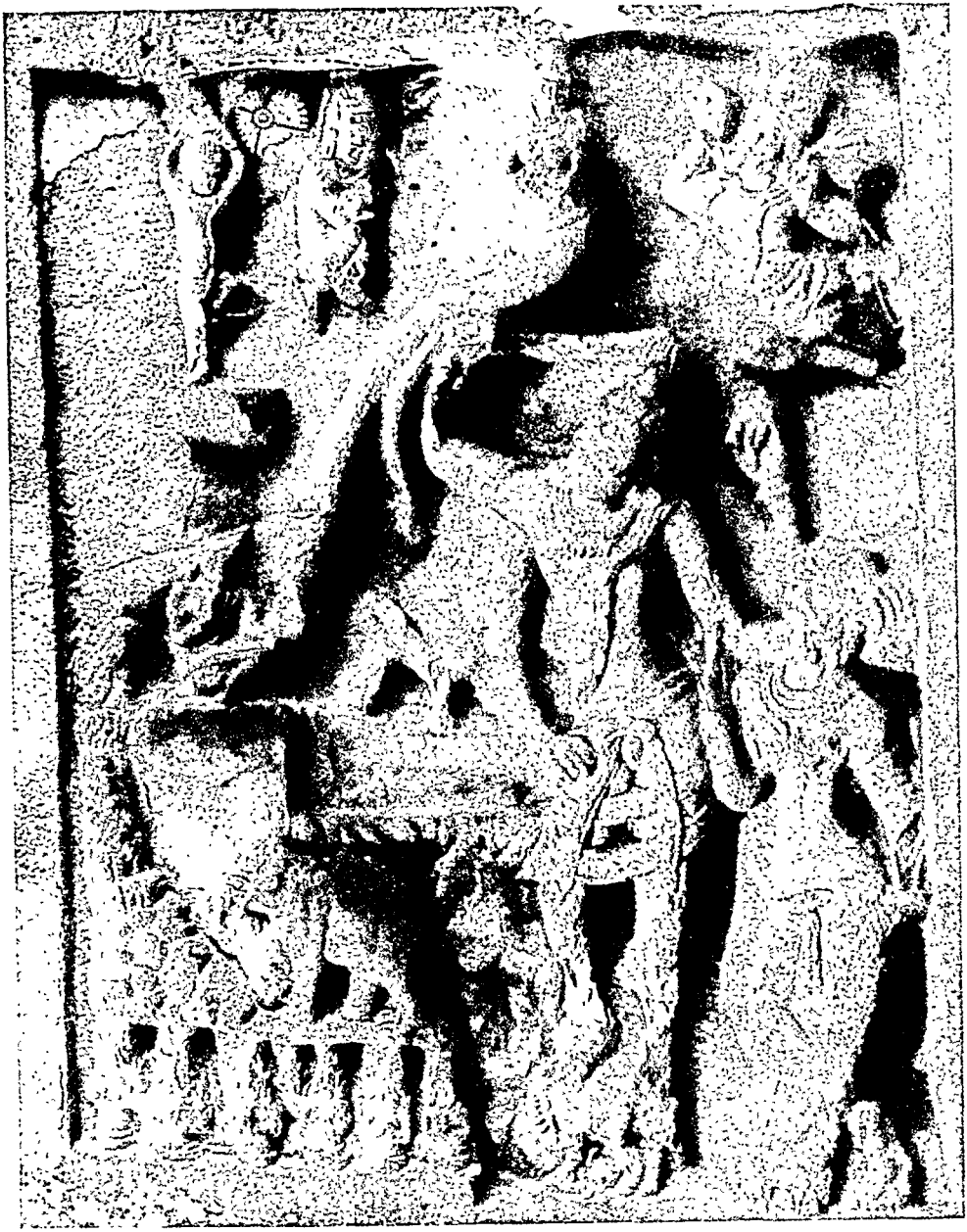

Fig. 18. Gaṅgāvisarjanamūrti, Rāshṭrakūta, 8th century A.D., Ellora.

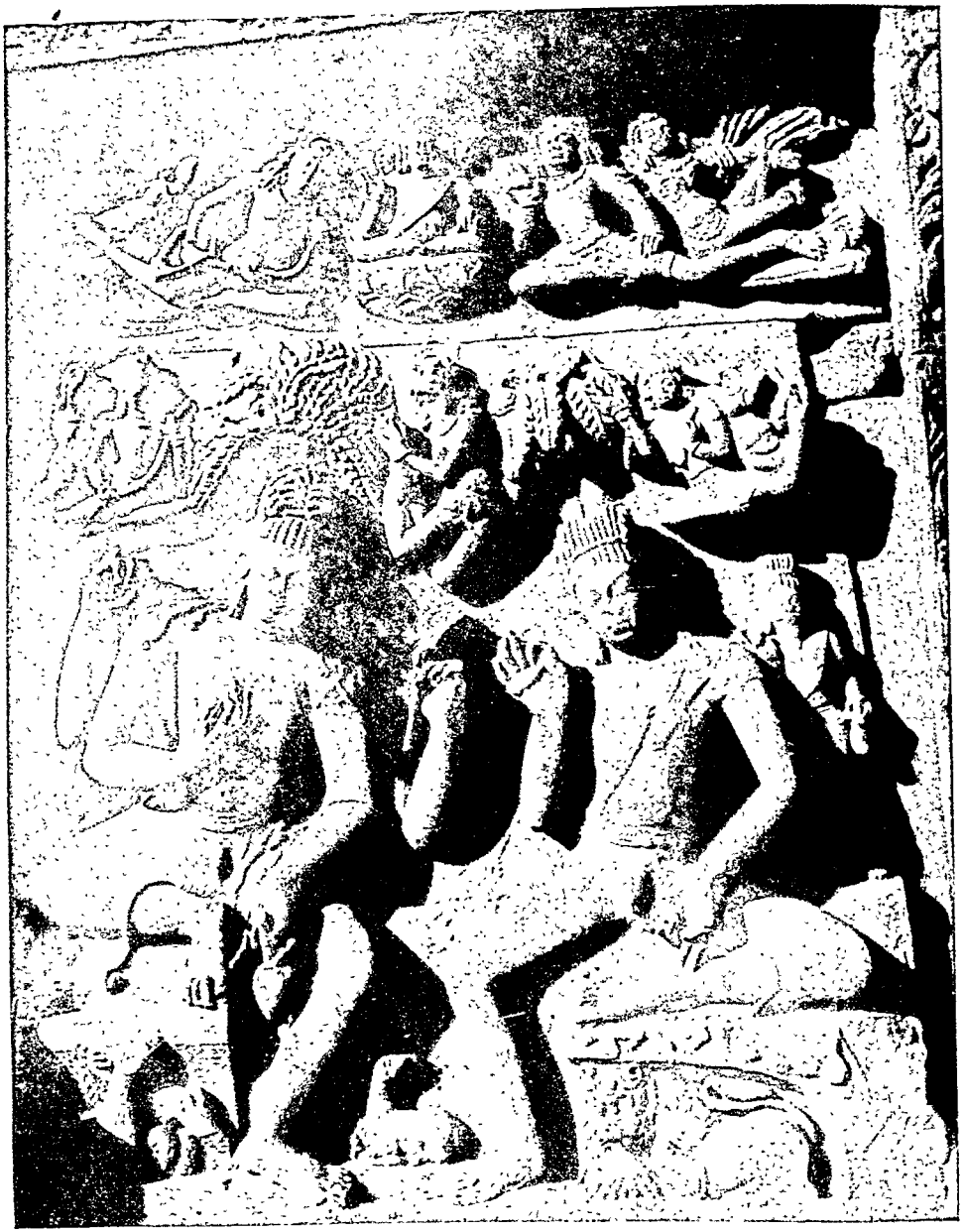

Fig. 20. Nara with Nārāyana as *ṛishis* wearing *kṛishṇājina* upper garment, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Deogarh.

Fig. 22. Nārada, Choḷa, 12th-13th century A.D., Naṭarāja Temple, Chidaṁbaram.

Fig. 23. Vyāsa with his disciples and Śaṅkara, flanking Dakshiṇāmūrti, Pallava, 8th century A.D., Airāvaṇeśvara Temple, Kāñchīpuram.

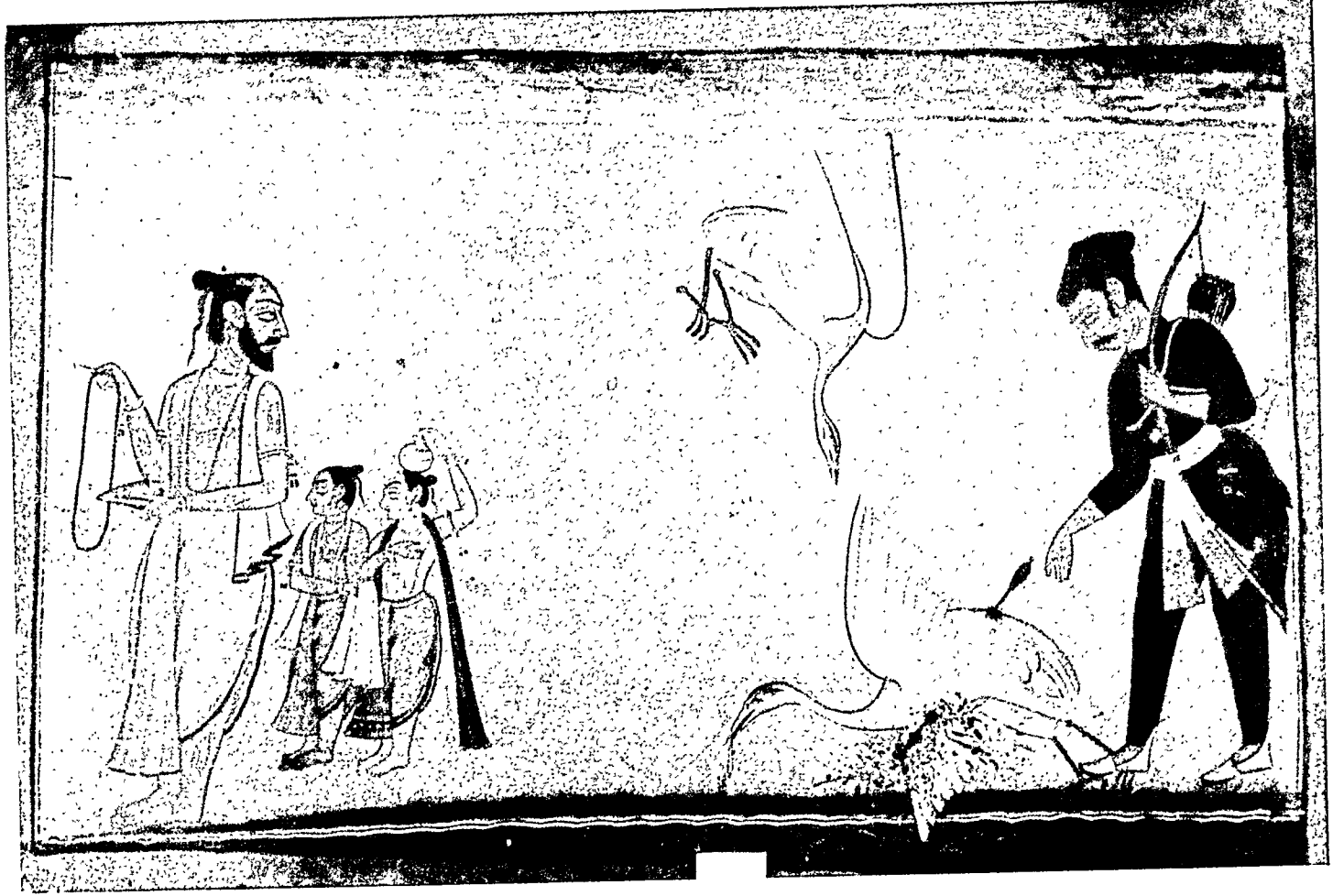

Fig. 24. The grief of Vālmīki spurts into poetry, Basohli school, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

Fig. 25. Agastya, Choḷa, 12th-13th century A.D., Naṭarāja Temple, Chidaṁbaram.

Fig 26. Dakshinamurti, *paramaguru* of all sages including Agastya, Chola, 10th century A.D., National Museum.

Fig. 27. Triśaṅku falling from heaven in Trivikrama panel, Pāṇḍya, 8th century A.D., Nāmakkal.

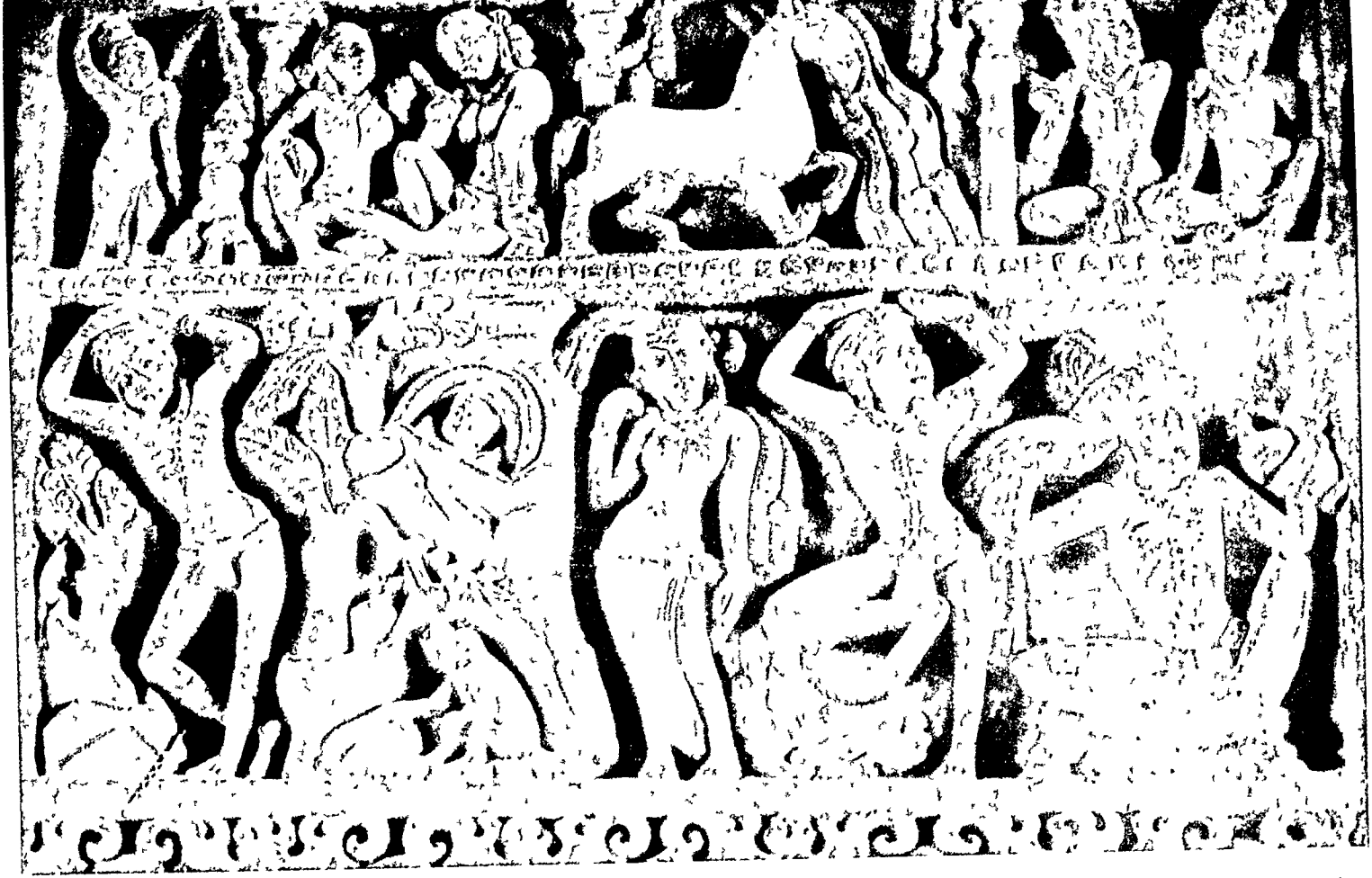

Fig. 29. Jahnu drinking up Gaṅgā and releasing her through his ear, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A D , Paṭṭaḍakal.

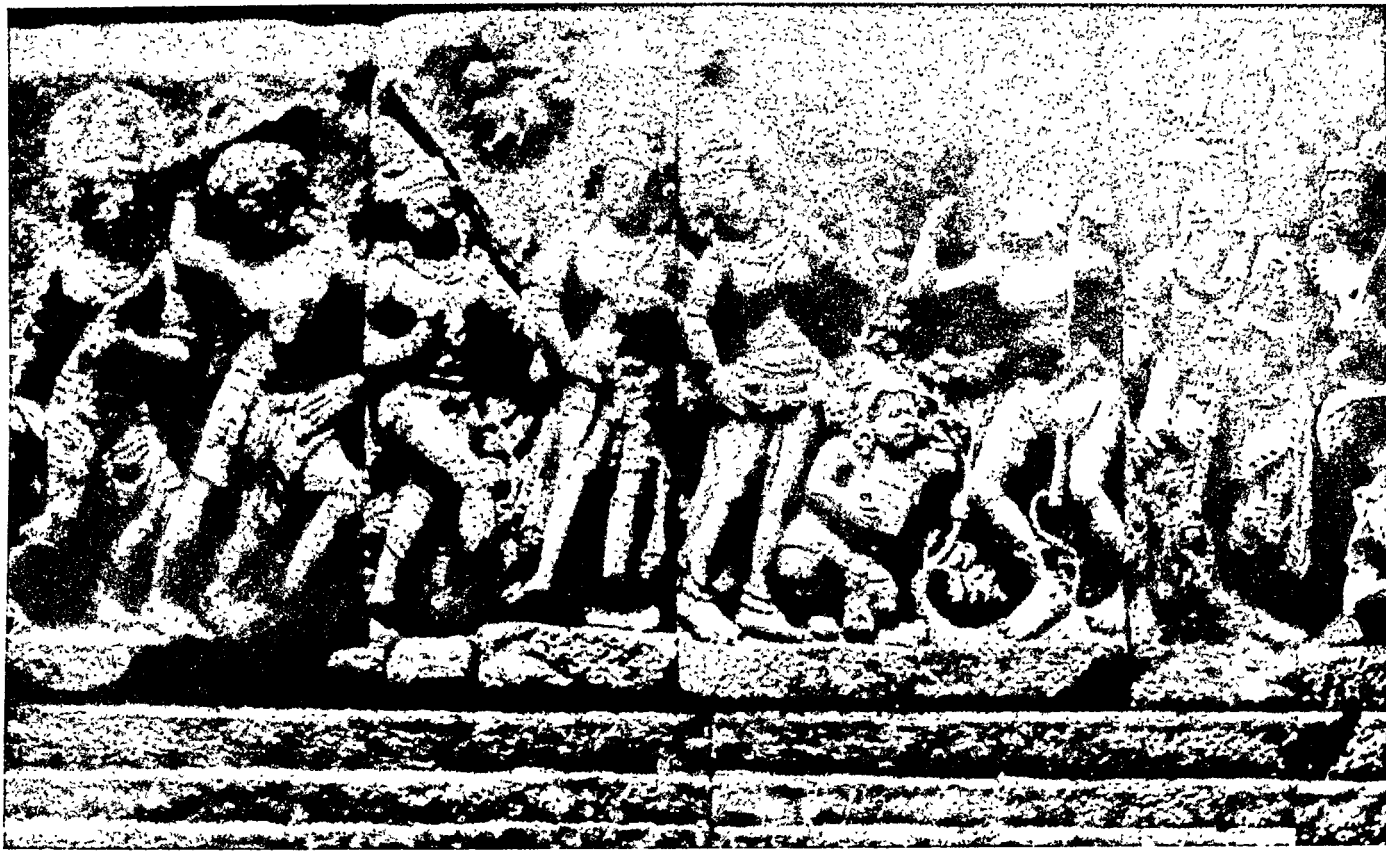

Fig. 30. Paraśurāma encountering Rāma, Śailendra, 9th century A.D. Prāmbaṇam, Indonesia.

Fig. 31b. Paraśurāma encountering Rāma, Śailendra, 9th century A.D. Prāmbaṇam, Indonesia.

Fig. 33. Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa, with Śarabhaṅga, Bahsoli school, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

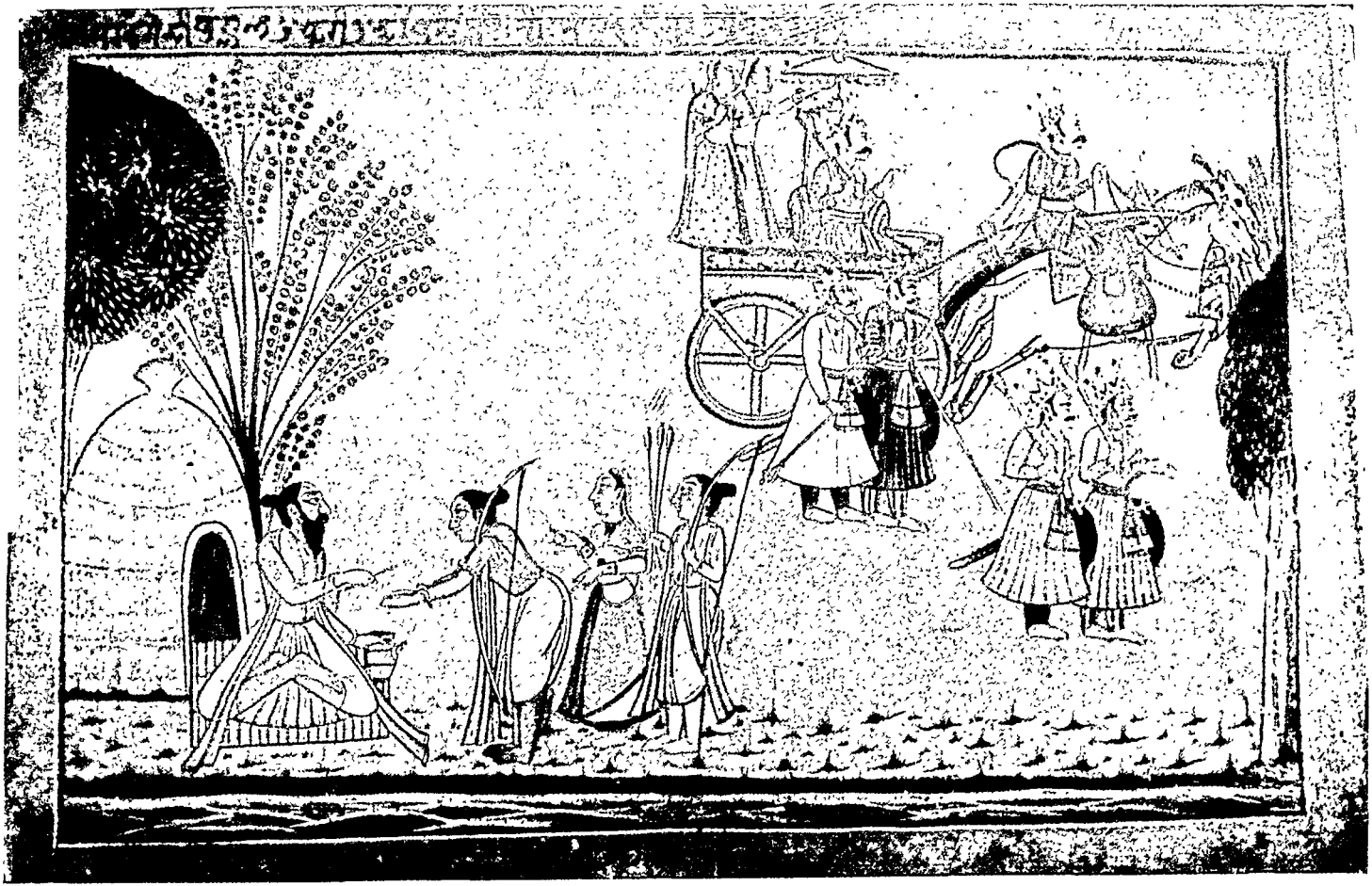

Fig. 34. Sutīkshṇa welcomes Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa before he proceeds in the aerial car to heaven, Bahsoli school, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

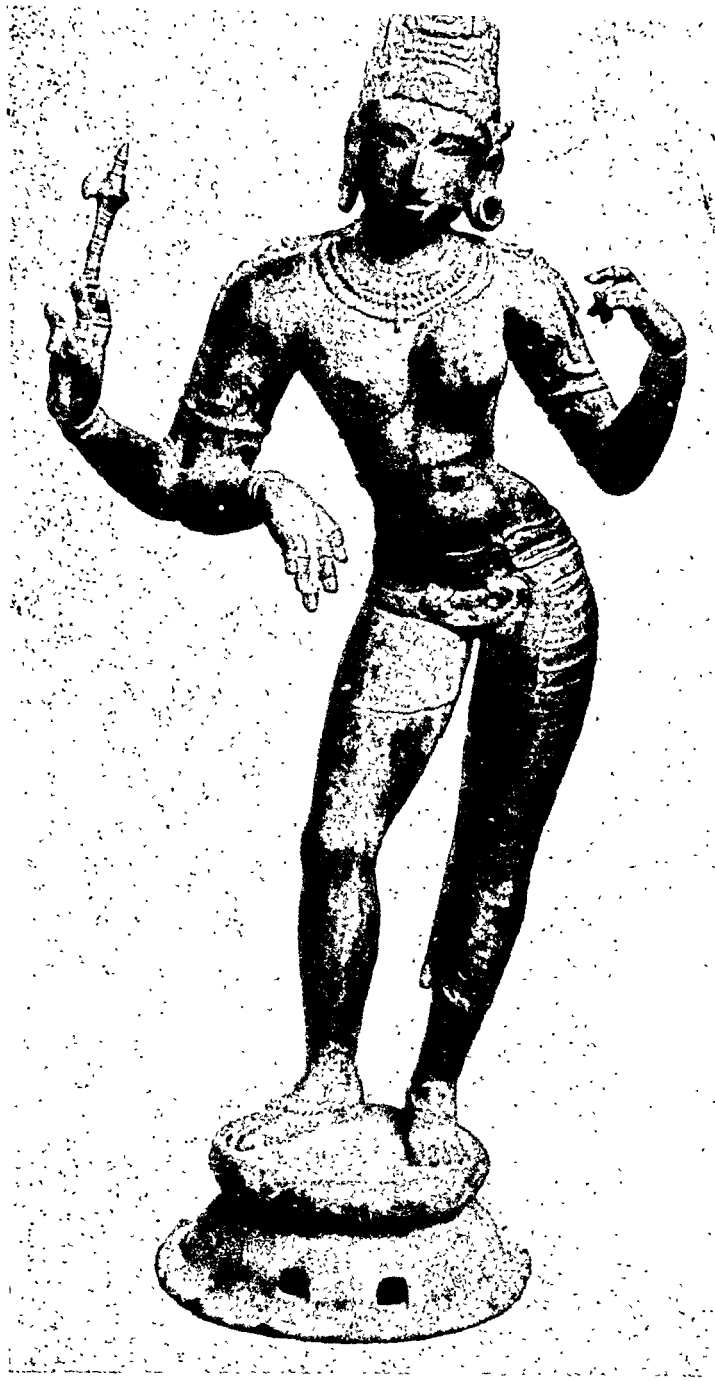

Fig. 35. Hermaphrodite or Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva, highest of *Yogis*, Choḷa, 11th century A.D., Tiruveṅkāḍu, Madras Museum.

Fig. 36. Ahalyoddhāra, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Deogarh, National Museum.

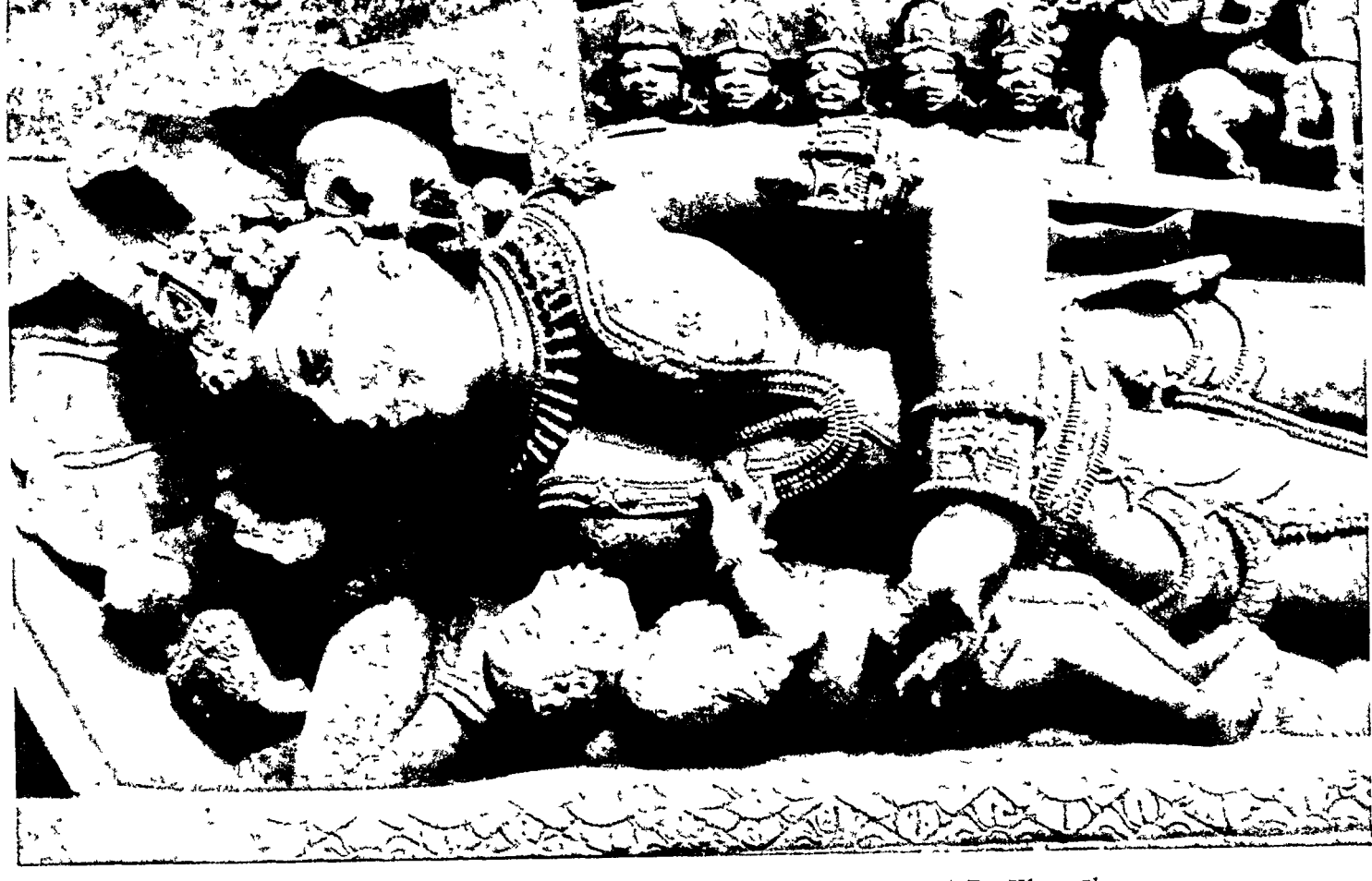

Fig 37. Astīka's birth from Jaratkāru, Chandella, 10th century A.D., Khajurāho.

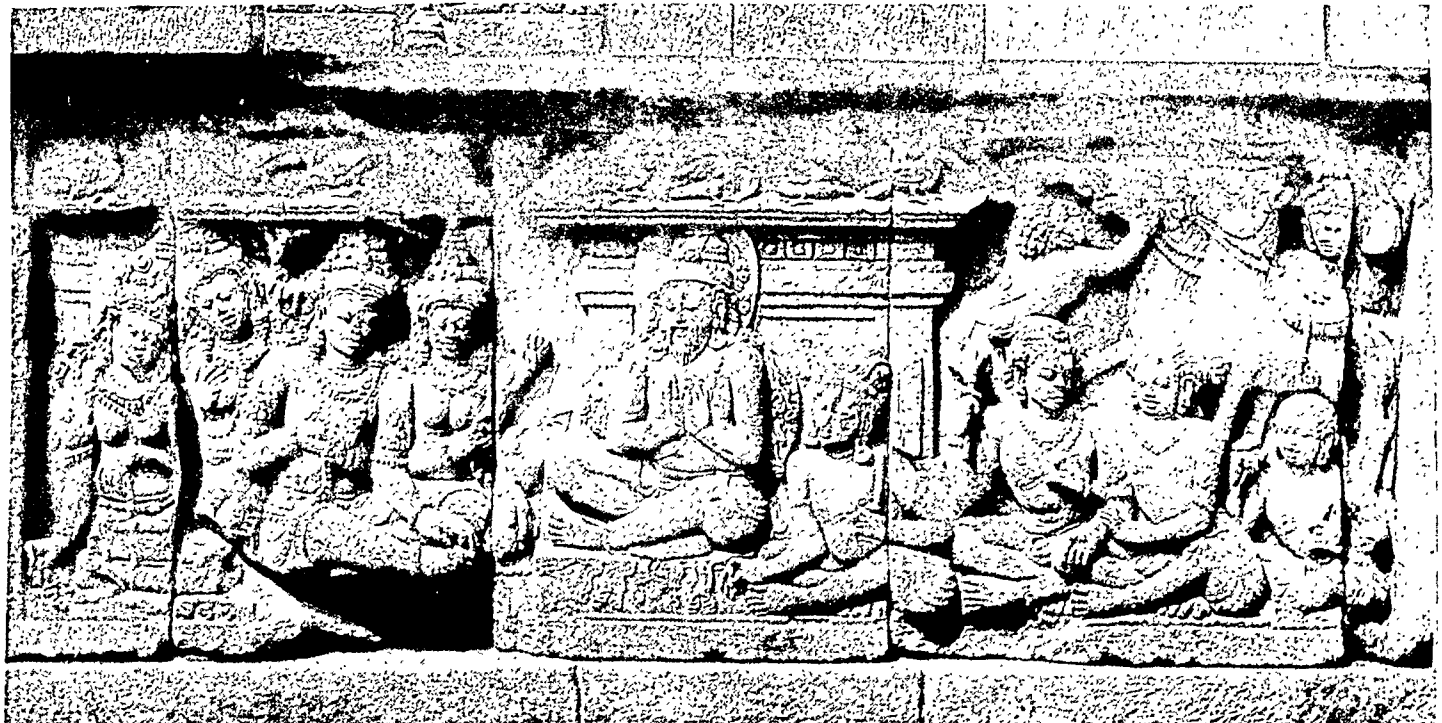

Fig. 38. Viśvāmitra reassuring Daśaratha about Rāma, Śailendra, 9th century A.D., Prāmbaṇam, Indonesia.

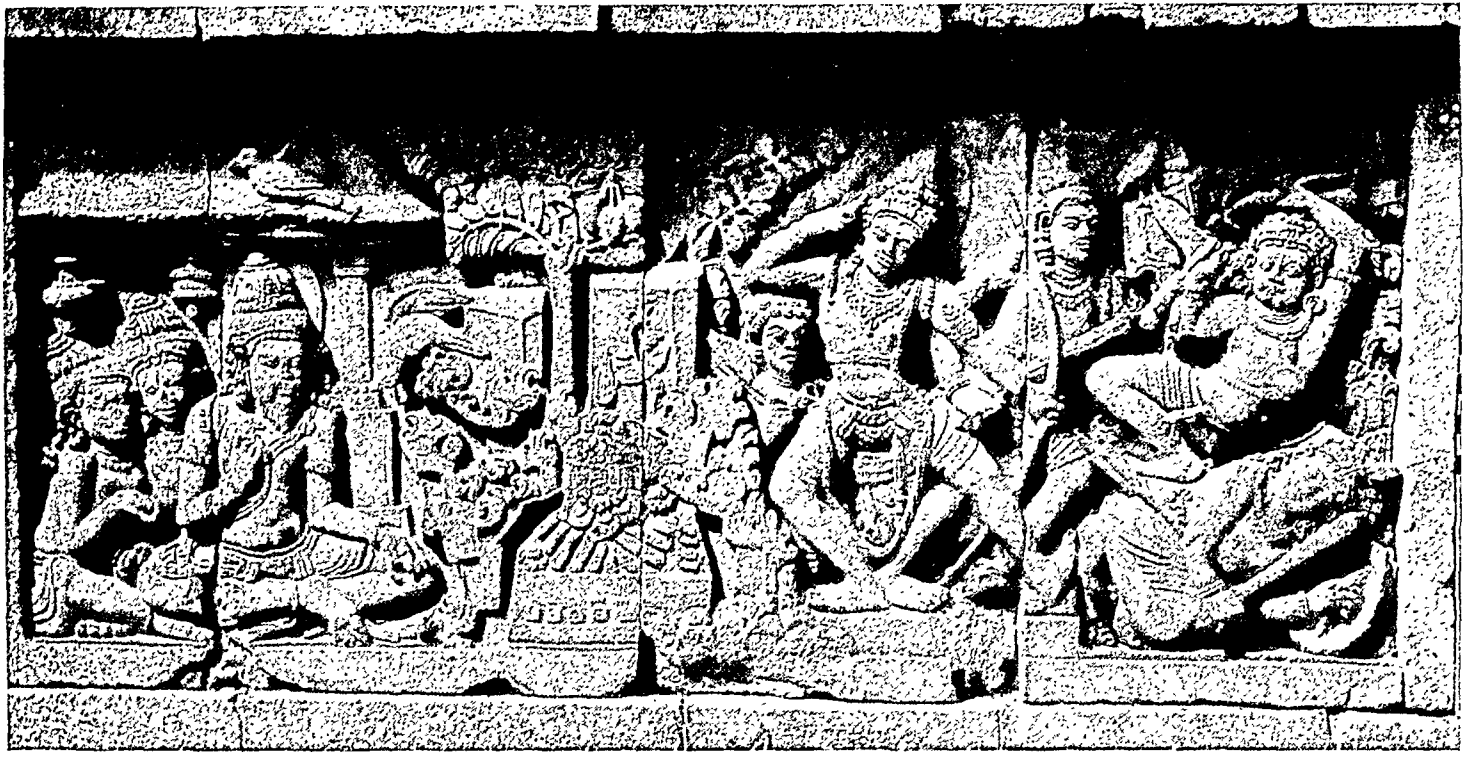

Fig. 39. Viśvāmitra's sacrifice protected by Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, Śailendra, 9th century A.D., Prāmbaṇam, Indonesia.

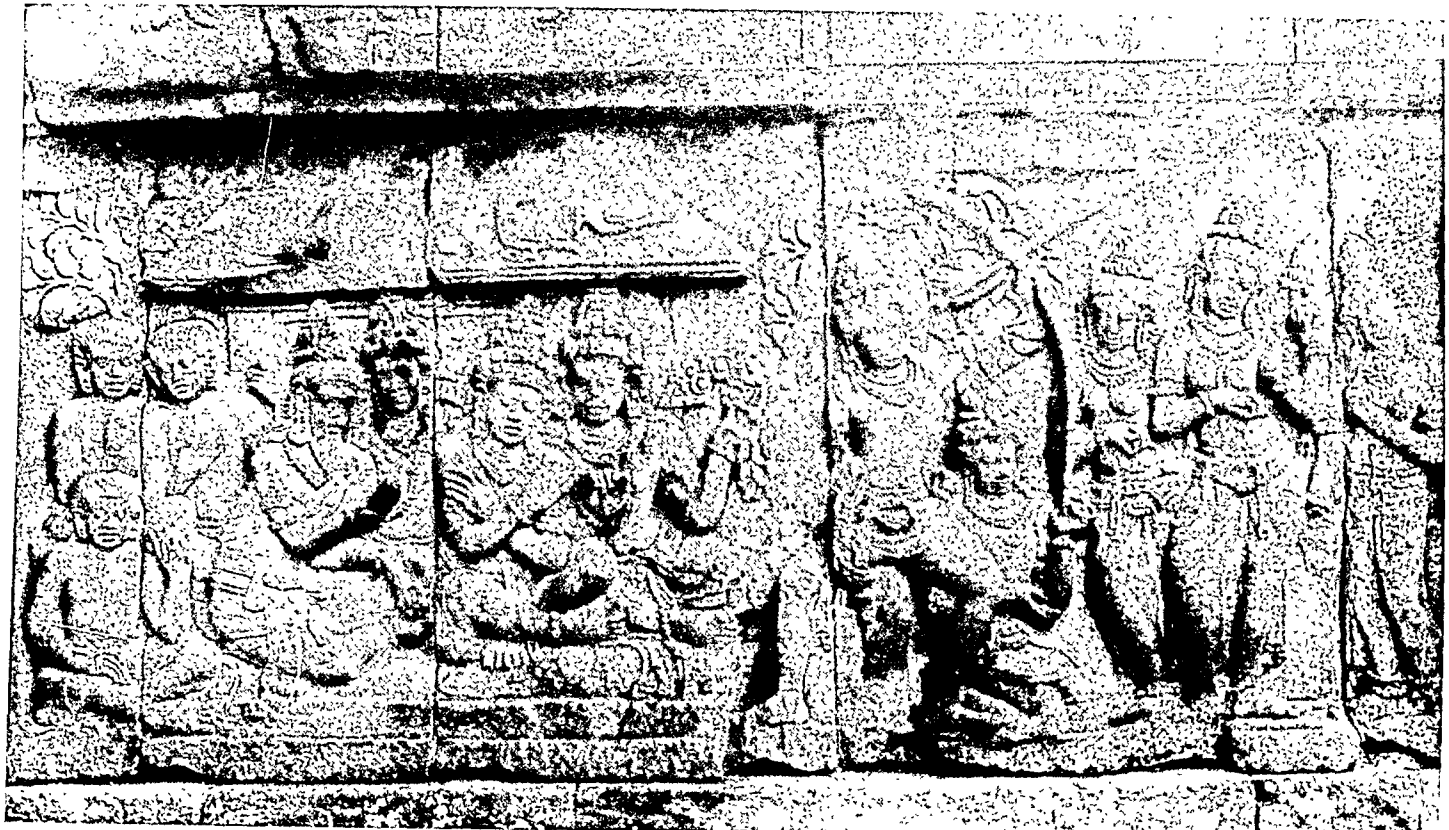

Fig. 40. Viśvāmitra, Janaka and Śatānanda watching Rāma break Śiva's bow, Śailendra, 9th century A.D. Prāmbaṇam, Indonesia.

Fig. 41. Mohinī the temptress at whose feet grovel great *ṛishis*, Vijayanagara, 16th century A.D. Jalakaṇṭheśvara temple, Vellore

Plate [illegible] 7th century A.D. Bedsa

Fig. 43. Māṇḍakarṇī and Pañchāpsaras, Eastern Chāḷukya, 9th century A.D., Bezwāḍa.

Fig. 44. Ṛiśyaśṛiṅga officiating as priest at the *Putrakāmeshṭi* sacrifice of Daśaratha, Choḷa, 10th century A.D., Nāgeśvaraswāṁi Temple, Kumbakoṇam.

Fig. 45. Ṛiśyaśṛiṇga, Kushāna, 1st century A.D., Mathurā Museum.

Fig. 46. Medallion illustrating child born of doe at the sage's hermitage, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Fig. 47. *Mūgapakka Jātaka,* medallion, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C. Bhārhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

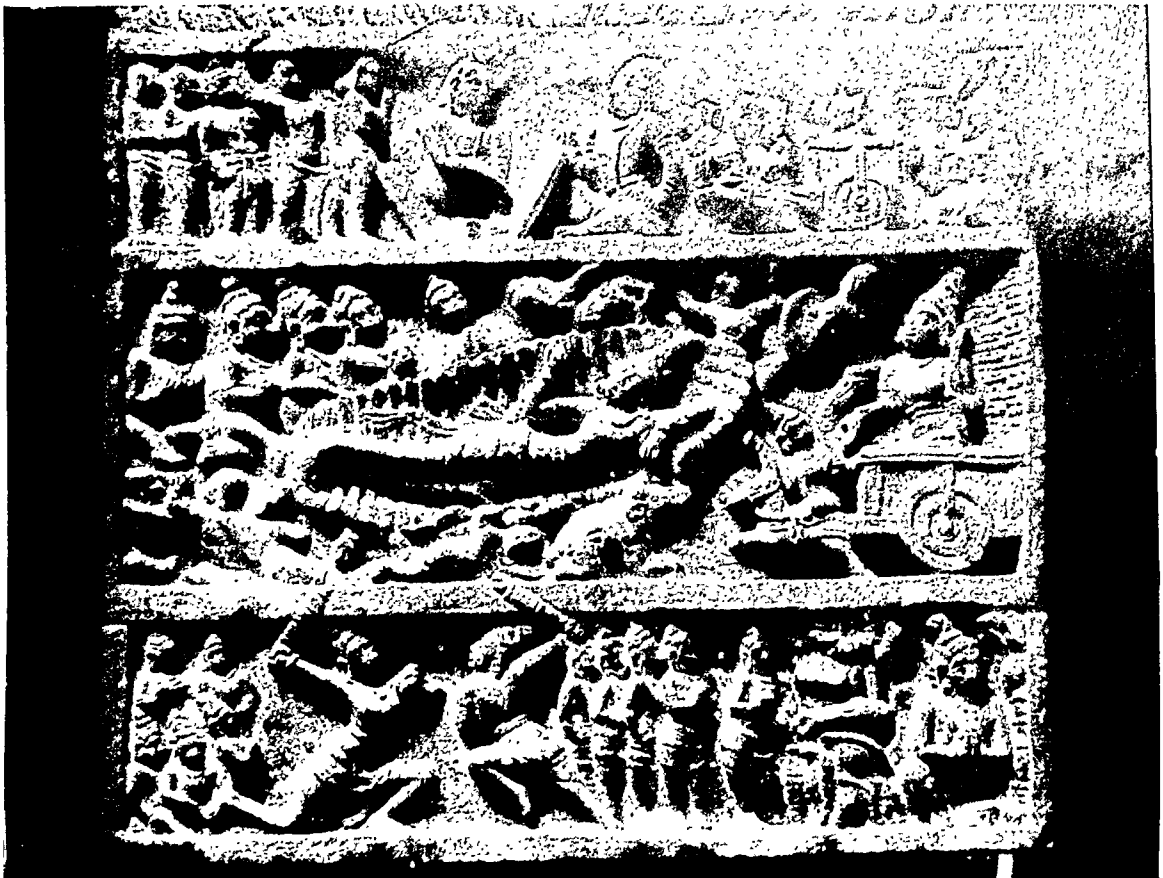

Fig. 48. Bhīshma on *śaratalpa,* early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D., Paṭṭaḍakal.

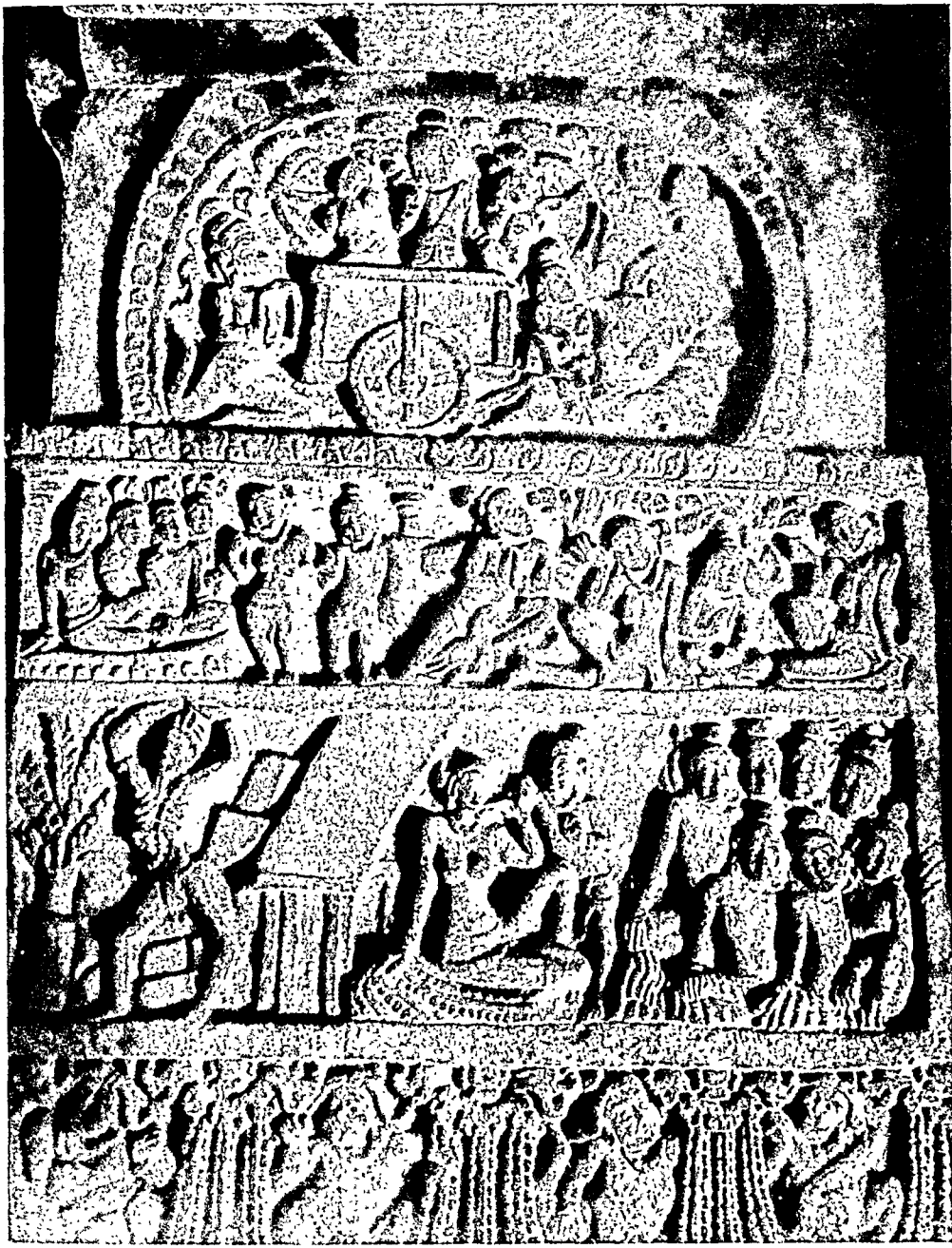

Fig. 50. a. Garuḍa born of Vinatā, fighting Dikpālas and other episodes, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D., Paṭṭaḍakal.

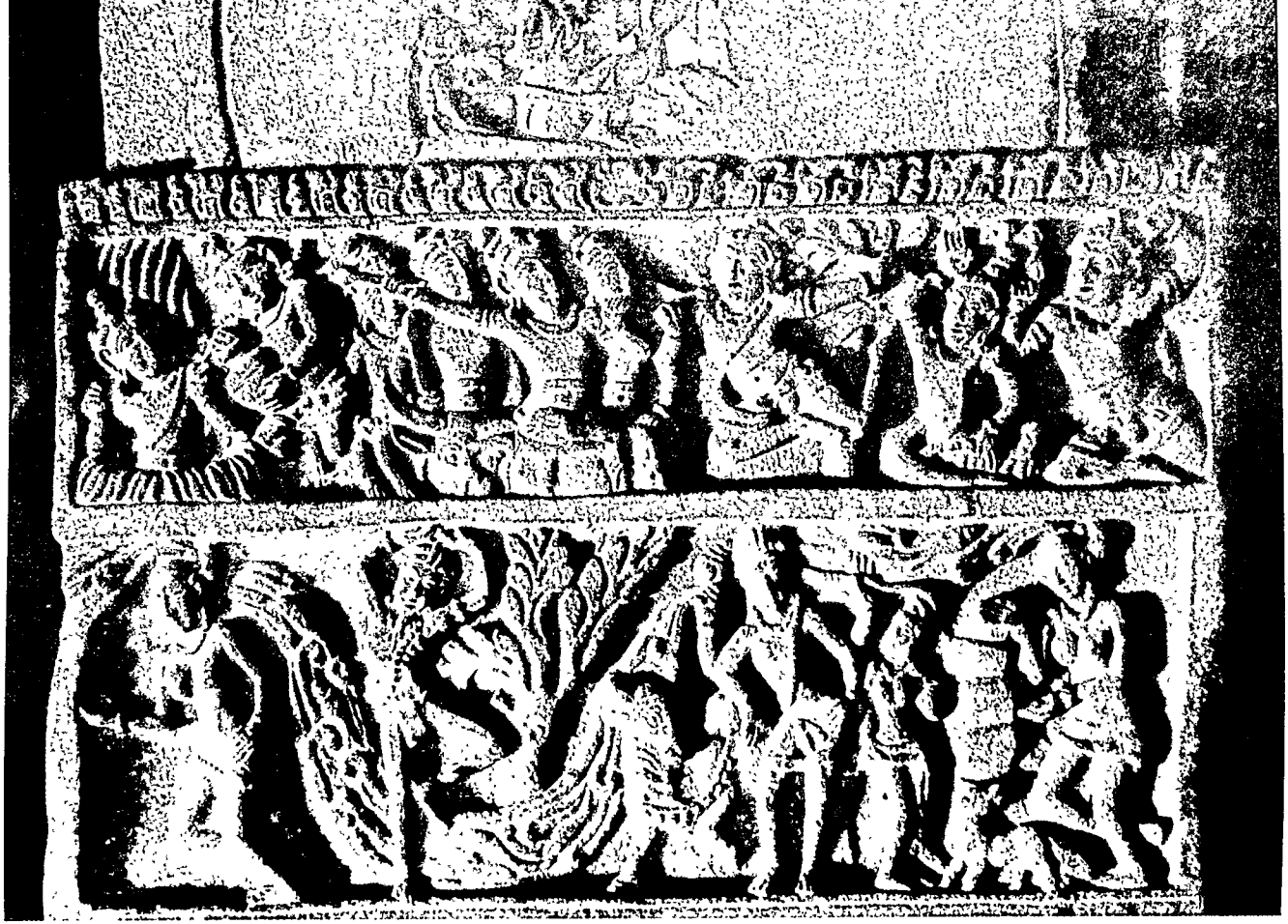

Fig. 50. b. Garuḍa born of Vinatā, fighting Dikpālas and other episodes, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D., Paṭṭaḍakal.

Fig 51 Sītā protected by her penance and *pātivratya*, late Chera, 18th century, A.D., Mattāñcheri Palace.

Fig. 52. Sages seeking Rāma's protection in the Daṇḍaka forest, Bahsoli school, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

Fig. 53. Bāhubalī with anthill and creepers grown at feet, Western Gaṅga, 10th century A.D., Śravaṇabeḷagola.

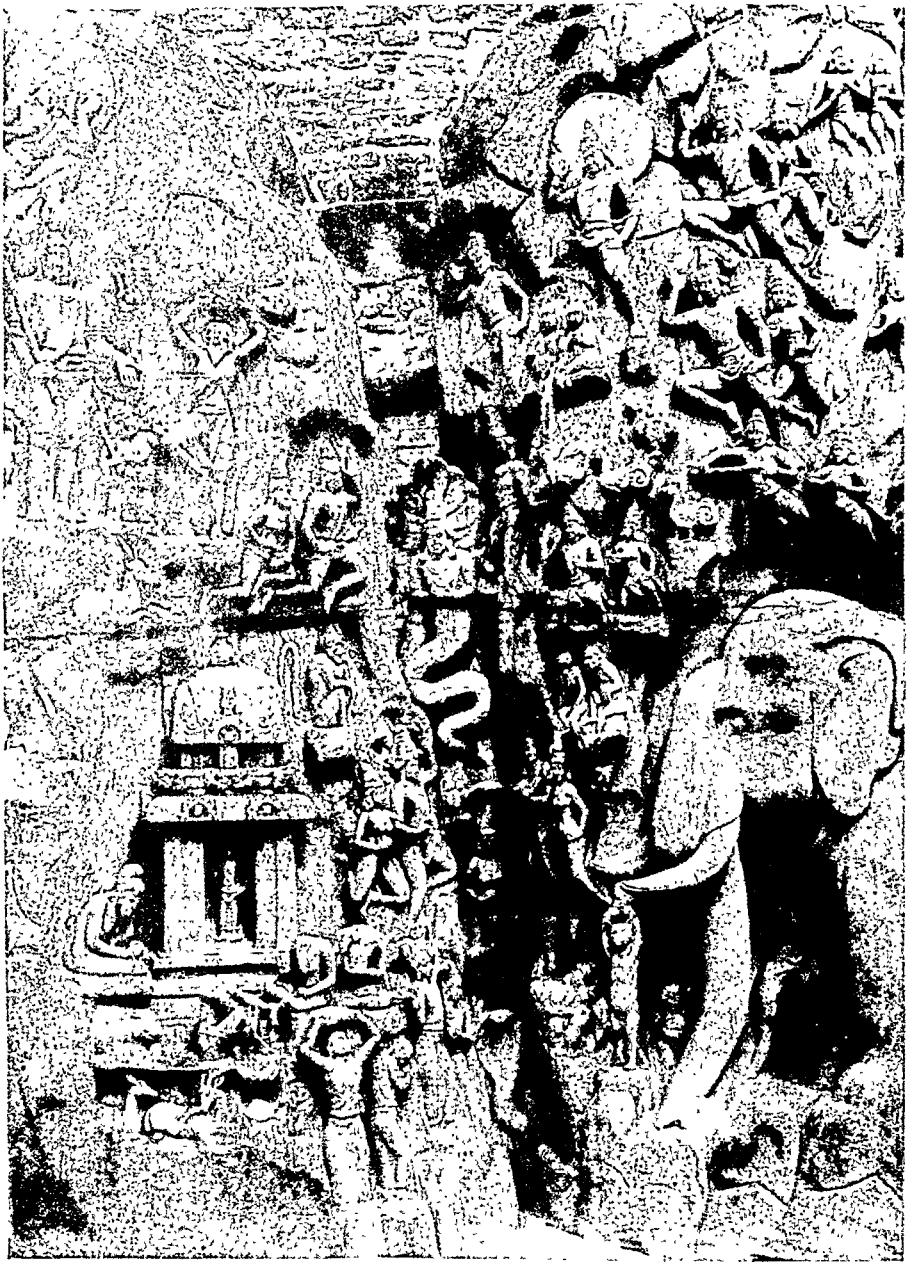

Fig. 54. *Ṛishis* in meditation and *anushṭhāna* of *ṛishikumāras*, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

Fig. 55. Śiva as Yogeśvara, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D, Elephaṇṭā.

Fig. 56. Devī performing penance amidst five fires, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D., Rameśvara cave, Ellora.

Fig. 57. Devī performing penance, early Choḷa, 11th century A.D., Tiruvālīsvaram Temple.

Fig 59 Naṭarāja, Vākātaka, 5th century A D., Elephaṇṭā

Fig. 60. Vīṇādhaṛa Dakshiṇāmūrti, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D., Rāmeśvara cave, Ellora.

Fig. 61. Mṛidaṅga Dakshiṇāmūrti Rāshṭrakūṭa, 8th century A.D., Kailāsa, Ellora.

Fig. 62. Mṛidaṅga Dakshiṇāmūrti, Pāṇḍya, 8th century A.D., Kaḷugumalai.

Fig. 63. Medhā Dakshiṇāmūrti Pallava-Choḷa transition, 9th century A.D., National Museum.

Fig. 64. Agni and *Brahmachārī*, Gurjara Pratīhāra, 9th century A.D., Cleveland Museum.

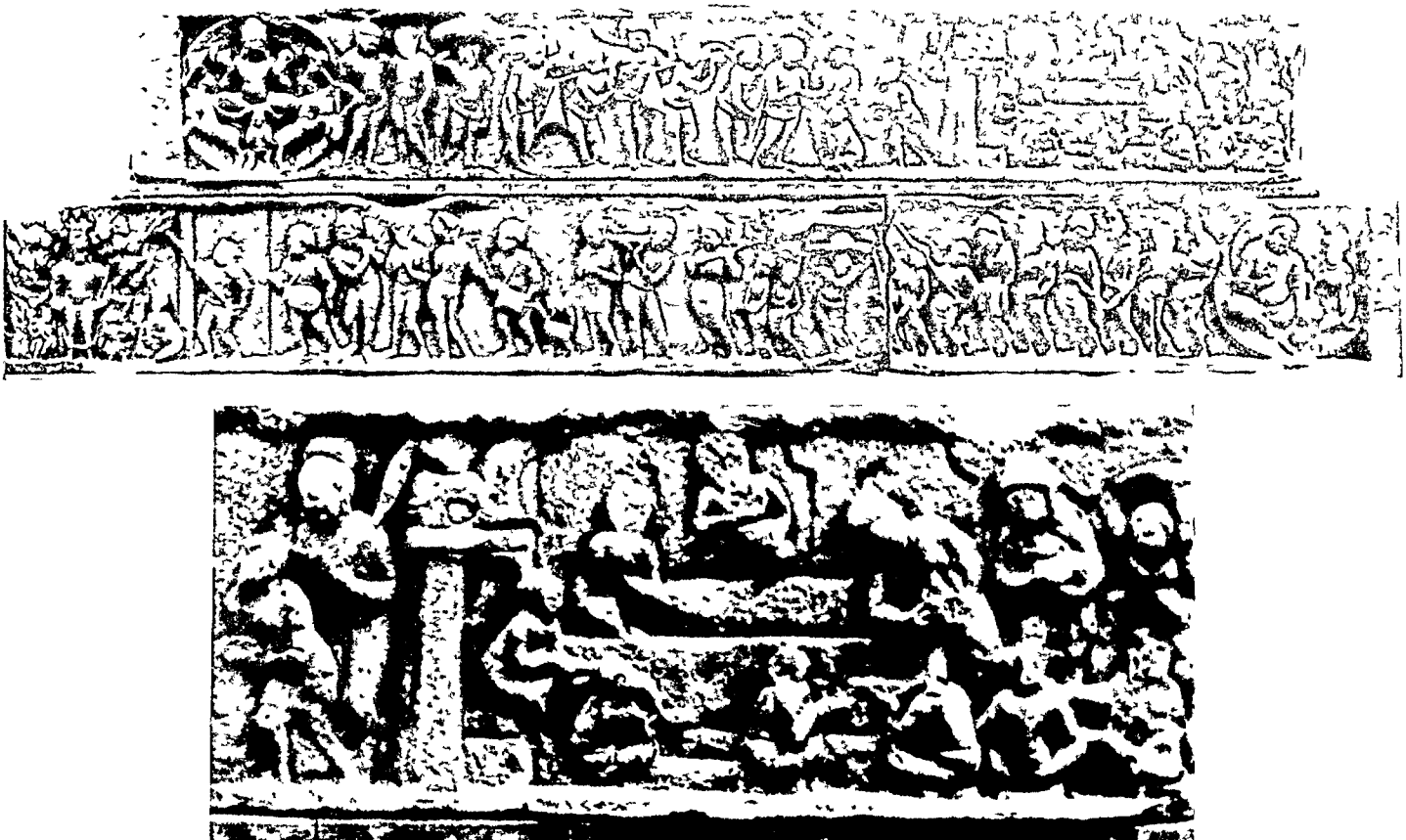

Fig 65. Feeding of pupils after *mādhyandina sandhyā* in a frieze, Gupta, 5th century A D , Garhwā, Lucknow Museum.

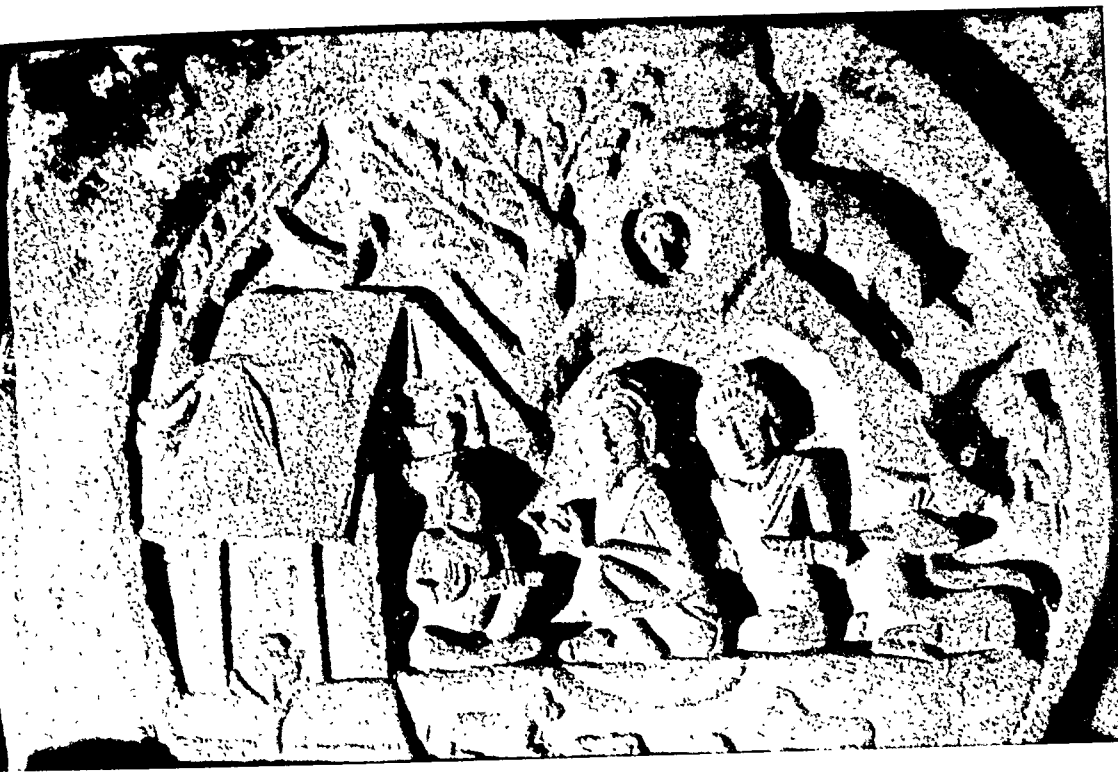

Fig. 66. Pupils studying *Vedas* from their master the sage in the *āśrama*, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D., Paṭṭaḍakal.

Fig. 67. Close up of *anushṭhāna* of hermit boys, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

Fig. 68. Dīrghatapas instructing pupils in forest glade, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

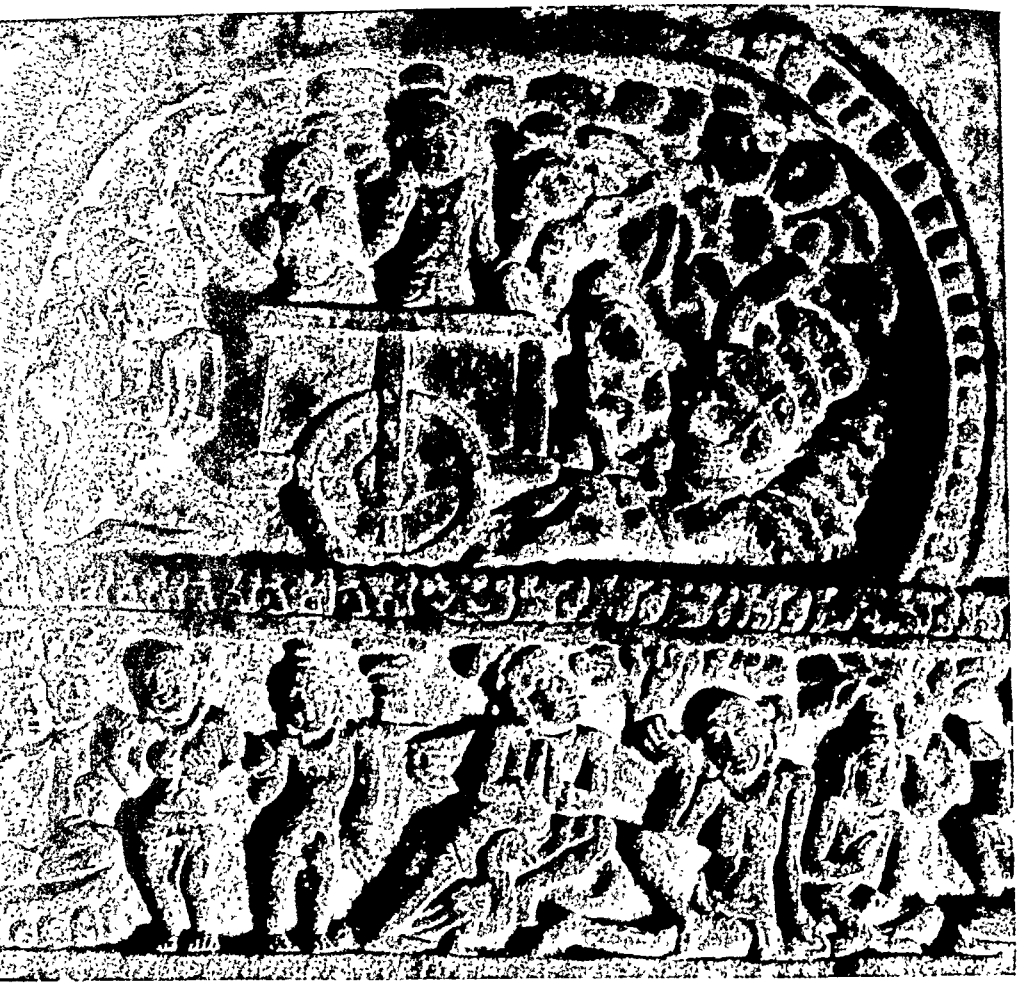

Fig. 69. Yājñavalkya following the sun repeating the *Śukla Yajurveda*, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D., Paṭṭaḍakal.

Fig. 70. Medallion showing the teacher admonishing pupils, Śuṅga, 2nd-1st century B.C., Mathurā Museum.

Fig. 71. Patañjali, Choḷa, 12th-13th century A.D., Naṭarāja temple, Chidaṁbaram.

Fig. 72. Vyāghrapāda, Nāyak, 17th century A.D., Temple Museum, Śrīraṅgam.

Fig. 73. Bhṛiṅgi, Choḷa, 11th century A.D., Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram.

Fig. 74. Bharata instructed by Śiva, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

Fig. 75. Taṇḍu instructed by Śiva, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

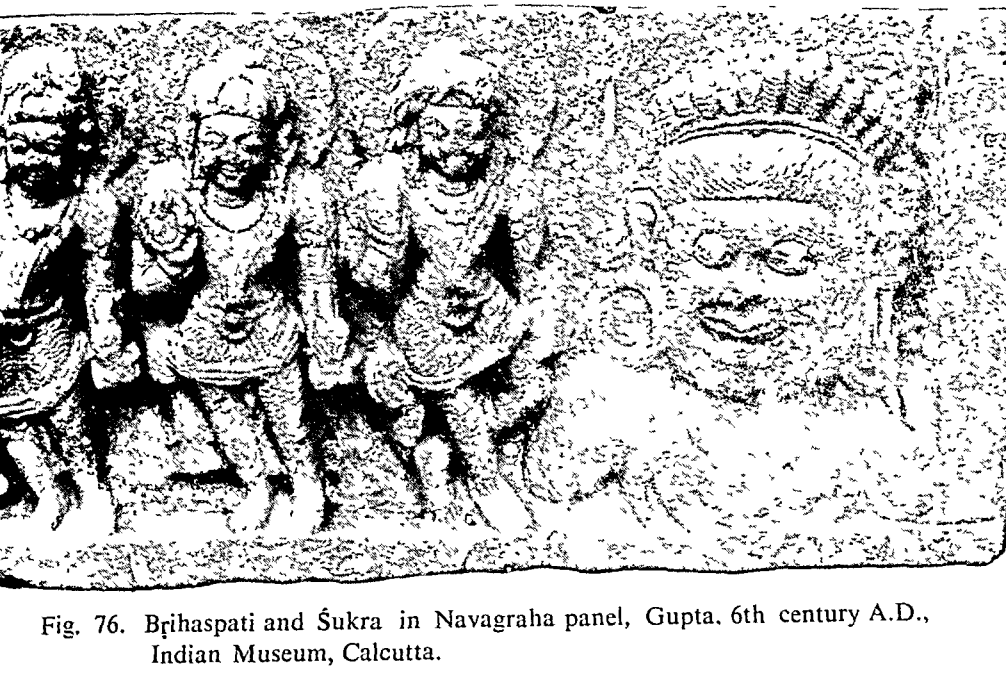

Fig. 76. Bṛihaspati and Śukra in Navagraha panel, Gupta, 6th century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta.

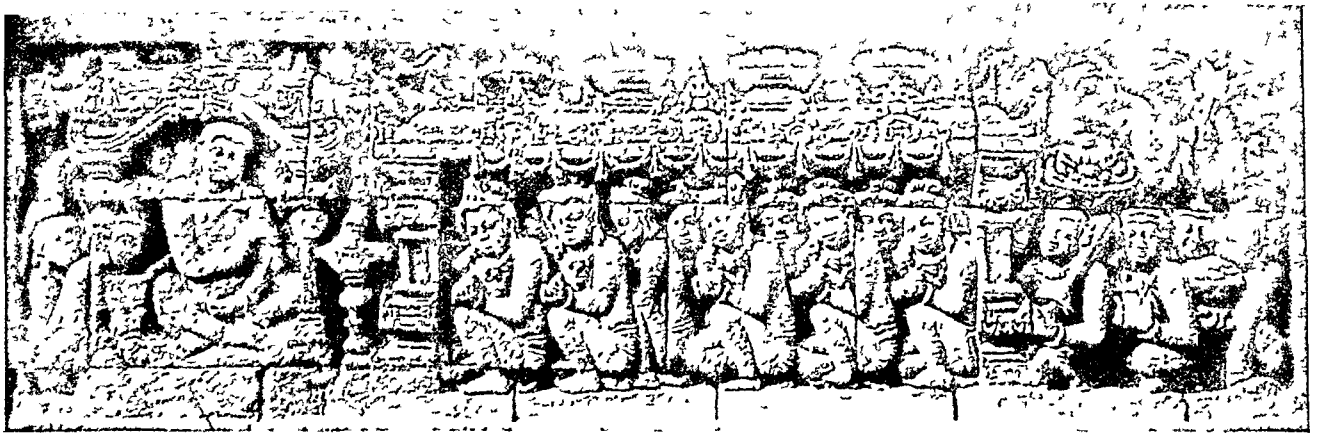

Fig. 77. Pupils studying the *Vedas* after *mahāsankalpa*, Śailendra, 8th century A.D , Barabudur, Indonesia

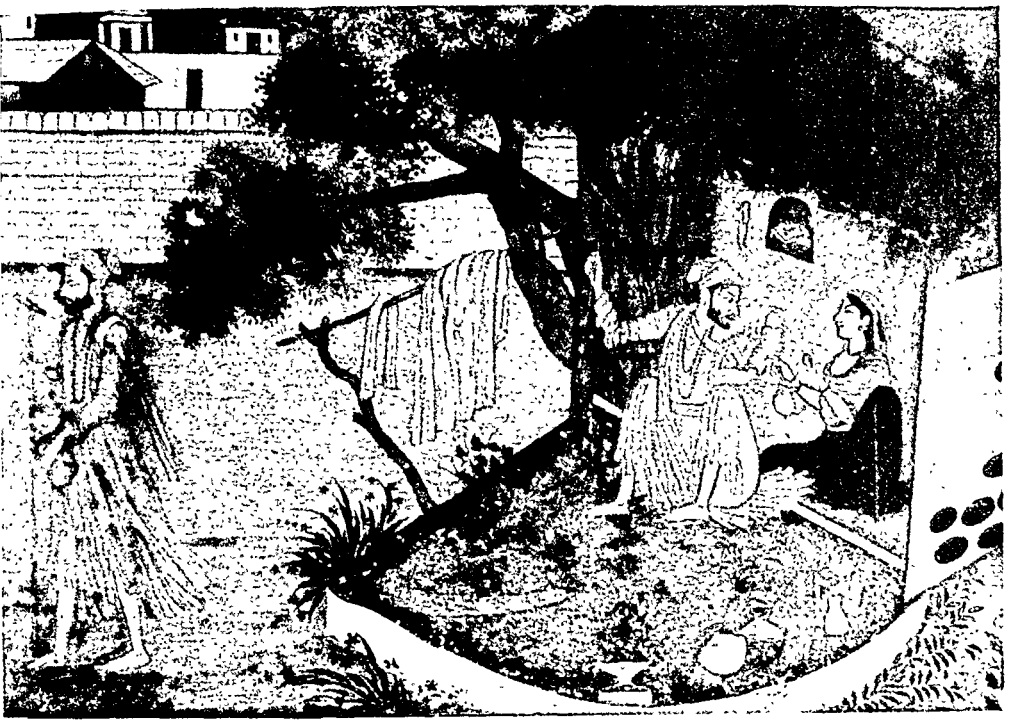

Fig. 78. Sudāma in his tumbled down hut and unaware of poverty's consequences, Kāngrā school, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

Fig. 80. Cupid reduced to ashes for shooting flowers on Śiva in meditation, Choḷa, 12th century A.D., Dārāsuram.

Fig. 81. Rāma expounding the highest philosophic truth, late Chera. 18th century A.D., Kerala.

Fig. 82. Mārkaṇḍeyānugrahamūrti, Rāshṭrakūṭa, 8th century A.D., Ellora.

Fig. 83. Kālāri, Choḷa, 1000 A.D., Rājārajeśvara Temple, Tañjāvur.

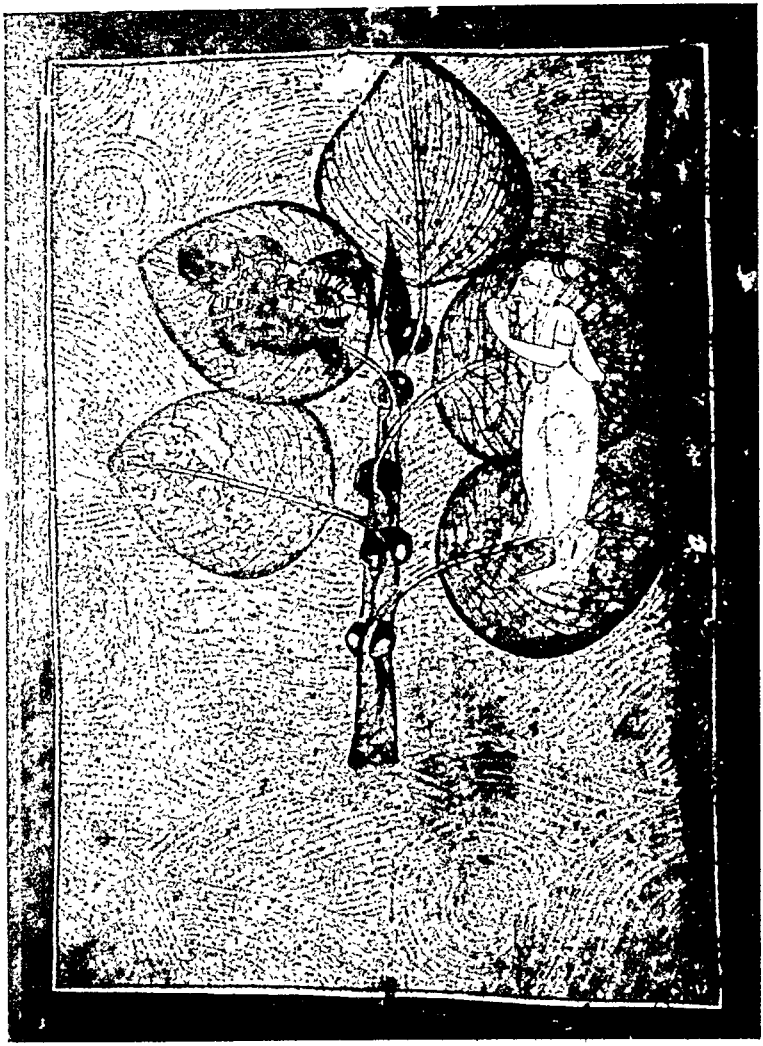

Fig. 84. Mārkaṇḍeya and Paramātmā Vishṇu as a child on banyan leaf, Kāngrā school, 18th century A.D., Chaṇḍīgarh Museum.

Fig. 85. Medallion illustrating the first act of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhīṭa, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Fig. 86. Vanadevatā with hand peeping from tree bough offering food and water to guests, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Fig. 87. Arrow in the body of the innocent deer like fire in cotton wool, Chandella, 10th century A.D., Khajurāho.

Fig. 88. *Ṛishi* near his hermitage in friendly conversation with birds, snake and deer, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Mathurā, Mathurā Museum.

Fig. 89. Dakshiṅāmūrti, Choḷa, 10th century A.D., Srinivasanallur.

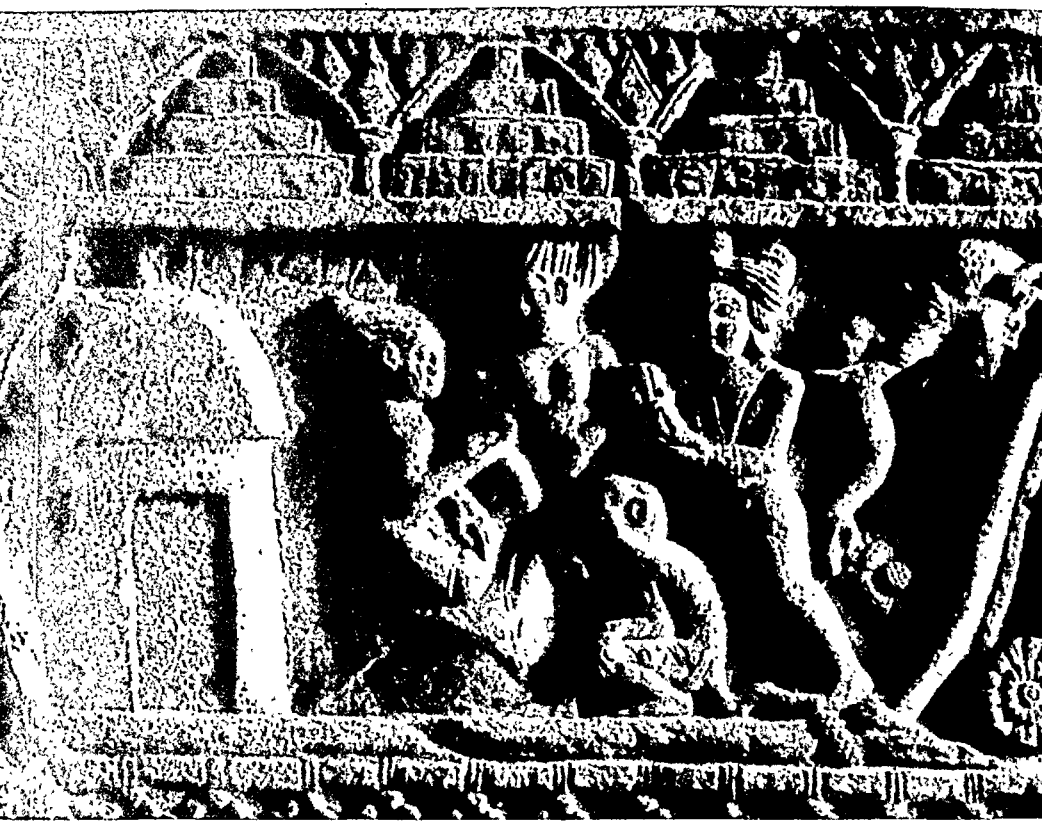

Fig. 90. *Bhaisa Jāṭaka,* Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum.

Fig. 91. The cat in penance, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

Fig. 92. Śeshaśāyi Vishṇu and the seven *ṛishis* as *saukhaśāyanikas* represented by one, Bhṛigu, Hoysaḷa, 12th century A.D., Belur.

Fig. 93. Trivikrama-Vāmana, Bali and Śukra, 10th century A D , Nepal

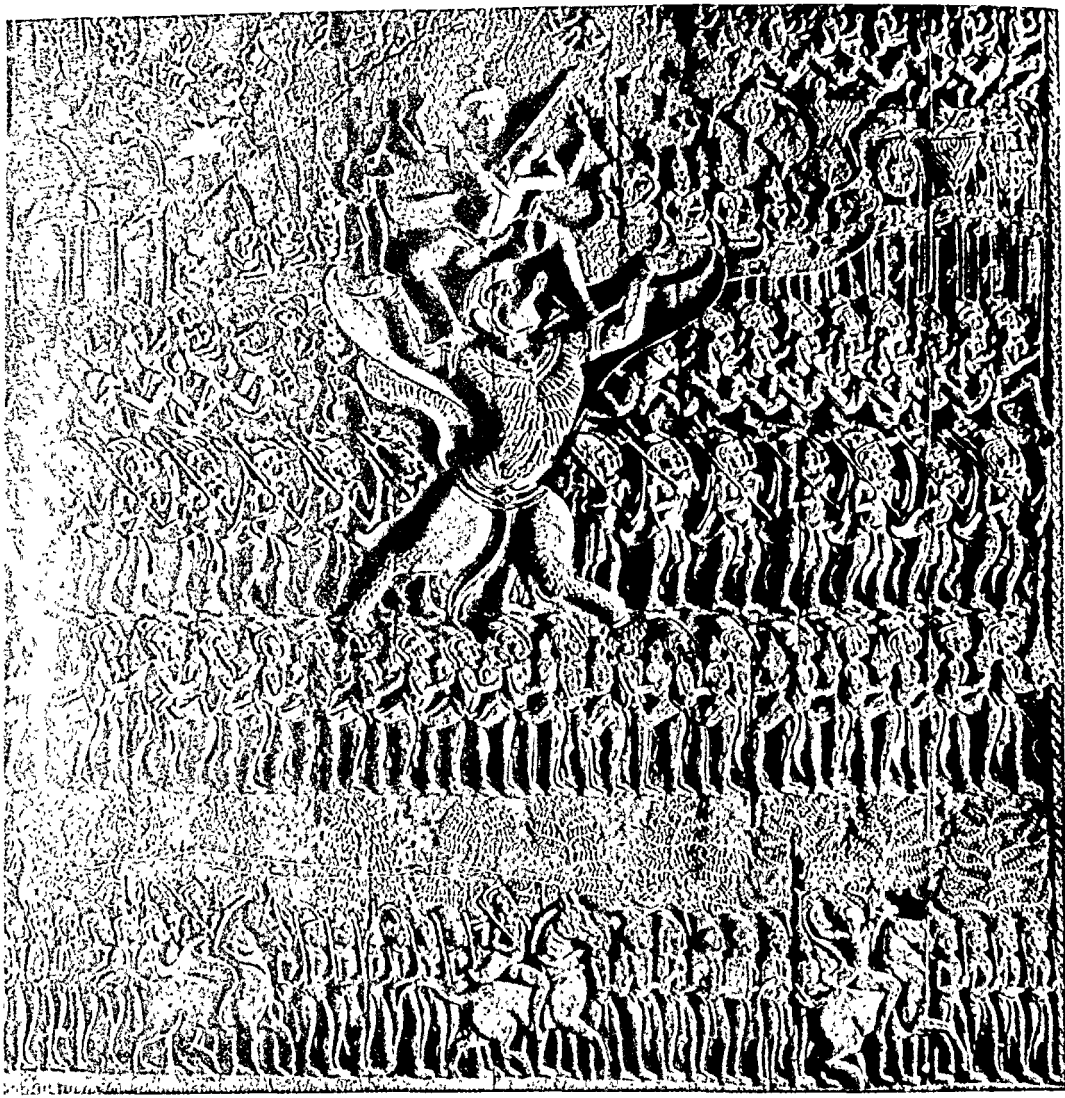

Fig. 94. Garuḍa carrying Maṇiparvata, Śailendra, 11th century A.D., Angkor Vat, Cambodia.

Fig. 96. Moon and Rohiṇī on lunar crescent, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Garhwā, Lucknow Museum.

Fig. 97. Bhārgavanandinī, Śrī Lakshmī Kushāna, 1st century A.D., Mathurā, National Museum.

Fig. 98. Bhṛigu, Pallava, 9th century A D., Vishnu Temple, Uttaram[illegible]

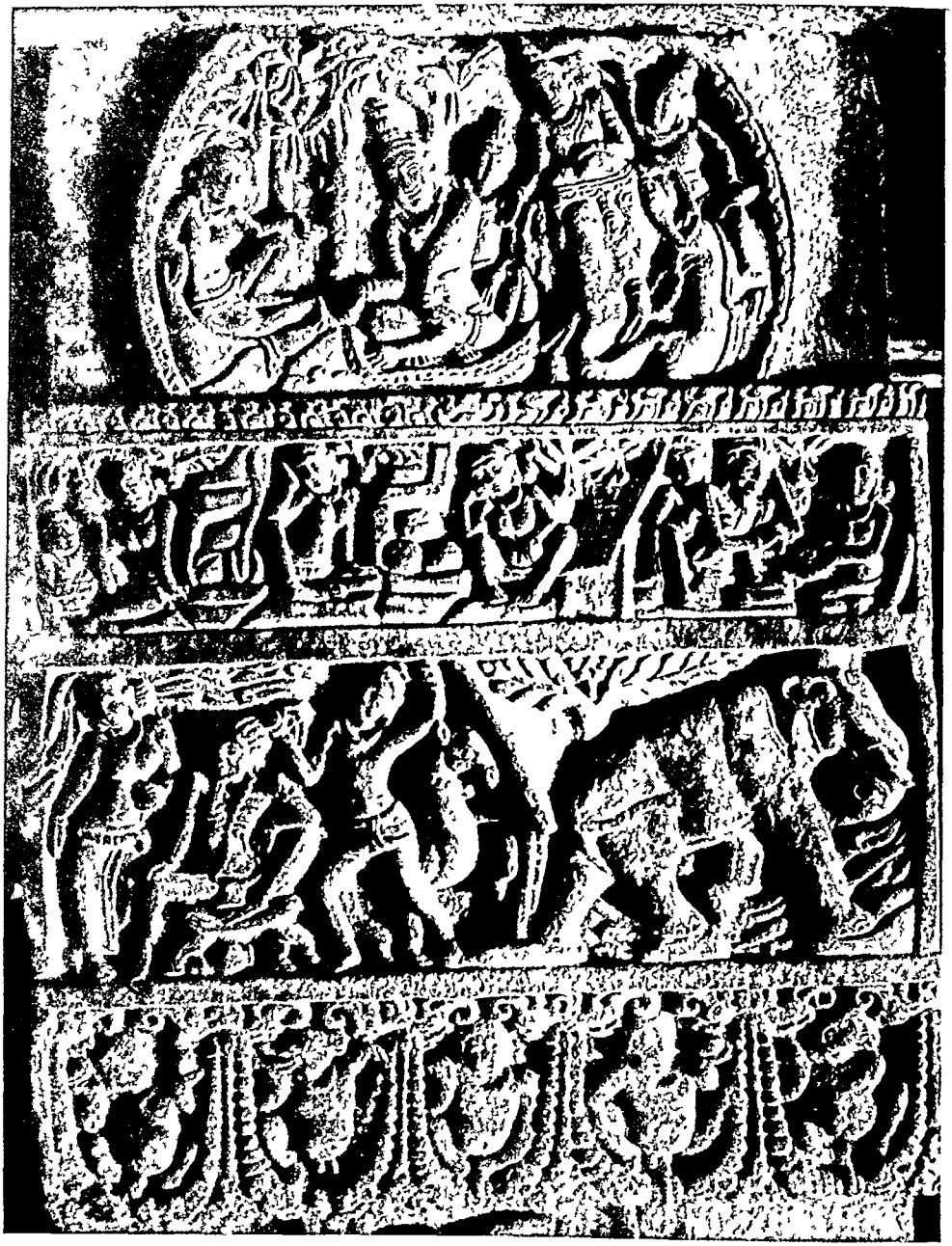

Fig. 99. Kapila attacked by the Sāgaras, early Western Chāḷukya, 8th century A.D , Paṭṭaḍakal.

Fig. 100. Face of Kapila on rear of Vaikuṇṭha Vishṇu, Utpala, 9th century A.D., Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Śrīnagar, Kāshmīr.

Fig. 101. Pulastya, 10th century A.D., Polonnaruvā, Śrī Laṅkā.

Fig. 102. Pulastya, Early Pāṇḍya, 8th century A.D., Cave Temple, Tirukkolakkuḍi.

Fig. 103. Mātaṅgī adored by Brahmā, Śiva, Vishṇu and Indra, Bahsoli school, 18th century A.D., Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Śrīnagar, Kāshmīr.

Fig. 104. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī with Agni and Brahmā as witness. Gurjara Pratīhāra, 9th century A.D., Bhārat Kalā Bhavan Museum, Vārāṇasī.

Fig. 32. Paraśurāma offering the blood of Kshatriyas to his *pitrīs* from pools of blood, Kāngrā school, *18th century* A.D., National Museum.